

PROTECTION AND POLITICS IN BAHRAIN

1869 - 1915

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to show how and explain why the relationship between Britain and the Shaikhdom of Bahrain changed between 1869 and 1915 and how this changing relationship was expressed in legal form. The period from 1869 to 1915 was the formative period of the growth of British protection over Bahrain. 1869 was the year in which there began the long reign of Shaikh ^QIsā b. Alī Āl Khalīfa. In 1915 the promulgation by the British Government of an Order in Council completed a series of pre-war diplomatic and legal arrangements which defined Britain's relationship with the shaikhdom.

Chapter 1 of this thesis is introductory. It describes Bahrain and its political system, and shows the involvement of the Anglo-Indian diplomatic structure in the Gulf with Bahrain up to the accession of Shaikh ^QIsā. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with Anglo-Bahraini relations in the period from 1869 to 1895, during which the Turkish presence on the Arabian mainland near Bahrain was a predominant factor affecting those relations. Chapter 2 deals with the period up to and including the signing of the Anglo-Bahraini Agreement of December 1880, and Chapter 3 with the period from 1881 to 1895. Chapter 4 is concerned with the period from 1896 to 1904, when various European Powers were showing a greatly increased interest in the Gulf, and when the British were searching for a way of putting their relationship with Bahrain on a different basis. Chapter 5 discusses certain disturbances which occurred in Bahrain in late 1904 and how the British reacted to them whilst Chapter 6 deals with the various British proposals for reform in Bahrain which were a sequel to the disturbances. Chapter 7 shows

the evolution of the various diplomatic arrangements through which the British brought about changes which they desired in their relationship with Bahrain in the years preceding the First World War. It also discusses the practical operation of the British system of protection over Bahrain in the context of events in the Gulf region during the same years. Chapter 8 forms the conclusion.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system used in the Cambridge History of Islam has been adopted for this thesis, except for certain nouns for which a particular spelling has become standard for users of the English language (e.g. Bahrain). The system of the Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition) has been followed for the letters 'Ain' and 'Kh'.

PREFACE

This thesis is an historical study of the Shaikhdom of Bahrain from 1869 to 1915. The central issue is the growth of British protection over the Shaikhdom. The thesis attempts to show how and why the relationship between Britain and Bahrain changed between 1869 and 1915 and how this changing relationship was expressed in legal form. The first agreement between Britain and the rulers of Bahrain had been signed in 1820. This was the Agreement, later known as the 'General Treaty', executed by the Shaikhs of Bahrain engaging not to permit the sale in the Shaikhdom of property procured by plunder and piracy. However, the period covered by this thesis starts in 1869, the year of the accession to the Shaikhship of ^CIsā b. Ali Āl Khalīfa, which marked the end of a lengthy period of particularly bloody internal conflict in the Shaikhdom. From 1869 onwards, the major challenges to the power of the ruling Shaikh of Bahrain were to come from forces based outside the island.

By about this time, the British had practically succeeded in their prolonged work of imposing a Pax Britannica over the whole of the Gulf. Although piracies still occurred, a relatively high degree of law and order at sea under British supervision had been established. At the same time, the 1870s marked the end of Britain's exclusive control of the waters of the Gulf as first one Power and then another began to make its appearance there. The period 1869-1915 in the history of Bahrain is, therefore, one in which the Pax Britannica was faced with growing challenges. It is the formative period of the growth of British protection over Bahrain.

Bahrain had already received a certain amount of attention from historians, particularly J.B. Kelly in his authoritative Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795-1880 (1968). However, none has given exclusive attention to this crucial period. Abbas Farouhy has written a doctoral thesis entitled The Bahrain Islands. It deals with the period 750 A.D. to 1951. Another work in English is Fereydoun Adamiyat's Bahreïn Islands which deals with the period 1800-1955. Apart from covering a much longer period than the present work, Adamiyat's study is concerned almost exclusively with the Persian claim to Bahrain. Briton Cooper Busch's Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1895-1914 (1967) has several sections dealing with Bahrain during the last two decades of the forty-five year period covered by this thesis.

Two or three books on the history of Bahrain have appeared in Arabic. All have been based on volume six of Al-Nabhānī's history of Arabia (see Bibliography) which deals with Bahrain. Al-Nabhānī made some use of the archives of the ruling Āl Khalīfa family of Bahrain. His work is a chronicle and makes little pretence to be an objective study as far as relations between Britain and Bahrain are concerned.

The present work is, therefore, the only detailed study dealing exclusively with Bahrain in the vital period of the growth of British protection over the Shaikhdom. There is, however, another reason why this work has been undertaken. The British Empire was not comprised only of colonies ruled directly by Whitehall. A considerable part consisted of principalities over whose rulers the British exercised

varying degrees of control and influence. This 'indirect rule' was particularly important in the Gulf. Within this area Bahrain was an outstanding example of a principality over which the British exercised indirect control. It is, therefore, hoped that the present work will provide an instructive case study of the growth of such a system of indirect control.

The sources for this work are almost exclusively British since the present writer was not able to secure access to the archives of the Āl Khalīfa of Bahrain. Of course, the British sources contain a large number of communications written by the Āl Khalīfa, mainly to British officials serving in the Gulf. By far the most valuable sources have been the official records of the India Office. Also instructive have been the private papers which have been consulted, especially those of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, a crucial period in the development of British-Bahraini relations.

I wish here to record my thanks to Dr. M.E. Yapp who supervised my work for this thesis from 1971 to 1975, and to Professor P.M. Holt and Mr. R.M. Burrell who were my supervisors in 1975-76. I am also indebted to the following for reading earlier drafts of my work for this thesis and/or offering their advice: Elizabeth Monroe of St. Antony's College, Oxford, Professor J.B. Kelly, Professor B.C. Busch of Colgate University, New York, Professor Walid Arafat of Lancaster University, Professor A. Duri and Dr. Mustafa Hiyari, both of the University of Jordan. A special word of thanks is due to Mr. M.A. Cook of the School of Oriental and African Studies for reading the whole work and offering me the benefit of his erudition and penetrating

understanding. I need hardly say that I alone am responsible for any shortcomings or errors in the present work. The first year of my work was financed by a grant from the British Council. For subsequent financial assistance I am indebted to Mr. Elias Farah and Mr. Issam Fares. In the collection of material I was helped by Mr. William Mulligan, Mr. Leslie Lewis and Mr. Majid al-Ās of ARAMCO; Mr. Yusuf Shirawi, Mr. Husain Sabbagh, Mr. A. Ulaywāt, Mr. A. al-Khalīfa and Mr. Muhammad al-Zāmil, all of Bahrain; Dr. A. Khuwaytir and Dr. G. al-Qusaibī of the University of Riyadh; and Mr. A. Alissa of Saudi Arabia. I should like to thank for their services Dr. Sadeq As^Cad, Mr. Peter Scragg, Mr. Thomas Tulenko and the staffs of the following institutions: the Public Record Office, the British Museum, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, and last, but not least, the India Office Library and Records where Mr. Moir, Mrs. Tuson, Mr. Farrington and the staff counter rendered invaluable service. Lastly, I would like to thank Ulrike Tykwer for sharing with me for four years the ordeals involved in the production of this work.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: BAHRAIN, BRITAIN & THE GULF BEFORE 1870

The term Bahrain has, in the past, been used to refer to that part of the Arab coast of the Gulf, known as Hasā, between Qatīf and Salwā.¹ However, the term is currently understood to refer to the Bahrain islands situated off this coast. This name was not the only association linking the islands with the mainland. The archipelago is formed by the major islands of Bahrain, Muharraq and Sitra, along with a number of lesser islands including Umm Na^csān, Nabī Sālīh and Zakhnūniyya. Bahrain, which is approximately fifty kilometers long and up to twenty broad, dwarfs the other islands in size. Commanding the sea at its north eastern corner, Manāma has evolved as the commercial capital, whilst Rufā^c, the summer residence of the ruling family, in the interior, and Budayī^c on the west coast, were also notable towns, in addition to several fishing villages and agricultural settlements scattered across the fertile landscape. A couple of kilometers away to the north east, lies Muharraq, the second largest island, which could be reached on donkey-back at low tide, but not without difficulty. Muharraq town served as the main

1 Yāqūt, Mu^cjam al Buldān, II, 72-76; Arnold T. Wilson, The Persian Gulf (London, 1959), p. 244n. G. Rentz & W.E. Mulligan, 'Al-Bahrayn' Encyclopaedia of Islam (London, 1960), I, pp. 941-44. See also M.B. Sinān, al Bahrayn (Baghdad, 1963), pp. 14-21, for several of the numerous interpretations accorded by Islamic geographers & biographers to the origin of the name Bahrain.

residence of the ruling Shaikh and his family and hence became the seat of government for the greater part of the year. Otherwise, this island offering little land for cultivation, the rest of its inhabitants were congregated in a few coastal villages, orientated towards the pearl fishing industry. The pattern of settlement over the remainder of the islands was dictated by the same factors, comprising small agricultural communities where land was available for crops, and the coastlines dotted with fishing villages.

Whilst the archipelago as a whole is closely hemmed in by coral reefs, its shores shelve gently into shallow water, and, apart from the hill of Jabal Dukhān at the centre of Bahrain, the terrain is generally smooth and low lying. The soil is not particularly rich and the southern part of Bahrain island is barren sand, salt flats, and scrub. Yet in the north of Bahrain, Muharraq and Sitra there rise a number of fresh water springs which provided irrigation for cultivation. A number of date groves were planted in these parts, alongside gardens bearing such fruits as citrus, melons and figs and a selection of vegetables.¹ Cereals were not grown extensively. Some of the lesser islands furnished pasturage

1 A.B. Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources, Localities, and Relations of the Tribes inhabiting the Arabian Shores of the Persian Gulf', 6 January 1845, in Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government, Vol. 24, new series (Bombay, 1856), pp. 104-5. Henceforth this work will be referred to as 'Memorandum on the Resources'. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia (Calcutta, 1908 and 1915), IIA, 241-2. Henceforth this work will be referred to as Lorimer. Admiralty, A Handbook of Arabia (London, 1916), I, 314. Henceforth referred to as A Handbook of Arabia.

during the summer for a few of the migratory tribes who divided their time between the Bahrain archipelago, and Qatar and the mainland.

Grazing requirements were not the only factor influencing the movements of such tribes to and from the islands. Other than the convenience of Bahrain's proximity to the mainland and the attractions of its wealth and agricultural amenities, throughout history it was not uncommon for even fairly settled tribes to uproot and transfer to another territory.

This was an inherent part of the tribal way of life.¹ The Āl Khalīfa themselves had behaved in this way. They roamed the shores of the Gulf seeking new settlements prior to their conquest of Bahrain in 1783. In the two decades preceding the conquest they established themselves at Zubāra on the western coast of Qatar, and they were able to wrest control of the islands from the governor of the Persian province of Fars, only with the help of neighbouring tribesmen, some of whom decided to resettle there with them. Other tribes came to join them later, driven by political circumstances and the search for a more prosperous living.

The support given to the Āl Khalīfa and their own kinsmen of the ʿUtūb, in 1783, came from the major tribal sections of Qatar and

1 J.B. Kelly, Eastern Arabian Frontiers (London, 1964), pp. 17-50, has a detailed study of the tribes along the coasts adjacent to Bahrain, their life and manners as well as their appreciation of the notion of frontiers. For further consideration of the tribes of Eastern Arabia see H.R.P. Dickson, Kuwait and Her Neighbours (London, 1956), and The Arab of the Desert (London, 1967).

Hasā, together with a number of the lesser tribes of the region, who had long since left their ancestral homelands. The most important tribe of the Hasā coast was the Banī Khālīd¹, whose power had extended north to Kuwait, south beyond Qatar and far into the Arabian hinterland, before they were reduced by the Wahhābīs of Najd, towards the end of the eighteenth century. Following their suppression by the Wahhābīs, the Banī Khālīd concentrated in Hasā, reluctantly submitting to the new power of Najd, but seizing every opportunity to resist, and for this reason they developed friendly relations with the Ottoman Turks.

In the Qatar peninsula, where the Āl Khalīfa's connections were stronger, the Banī Khālīd's kinsmen the Āl Musallam² constituted the most numerous single tribe, in the eighteenth century. They exercised control over most of the peninsula, with Huwailah on the north eastern coast as their main stronghold. Yet the development of Zubāra in the 1760s, under the Āl Khalīfa, eroded the importance of Huwailah and following the conquest of Bahrain, the Āl Musallam gradually lost their predominance to the Āl Khalīfa.

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- 1 Carsten Niebühr, Travels through Arabia (Edinburgh, 1792), II, 128. Lorimer, IIB, 1010-14 & 1932-35. See also A.M. Abu Hakima, History of Eastern Arabia, 1750-1800 (Beirut, 1965), pp. 39-41. Abu Hakima has also made extensive use of the local Arabic sources.
- 2 Lorimer, IIB, 1282-83. See also Fu'ād Hamzah, Qalb Jazīrat al-^cArab (Riyadh, 1933), p. 155. ARAMCO, Oman (Cairo, 1952), p. 205, Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 67, 70 & 115.

Another important tribe of Qatar was the Ma^cādīd¹, who dwelt also at Huwailah, in addition to the other coastal settlements of Fuwairit and Bida^c (Doha). From this tribe emerged the Āl Thānī family, who were to pose a serious threat to the Āl Khalīfa authority following the Turkish expedition to Hasā in 1871. Descended from the Rabī^cah, the Ma^cādīd enjoyed the same origins as the Banī Khālīd.

The Banī Hājar², meanwhile, were a sizeable bedouin tribe, split into two main sections, the Mukhaddabah and the Āl Muhammad, who did not always regard each other amicably. The tribe as a whole was spread throughout the Hasā and Qatar regions, though only those in Qatar, Mukhaddabah, manifested permanent territorial ties. They held themselves independent of all other tribes and Shaikhs, except in that they paid Zakāt to the Wahhābīs on certain occasions.

Notable amongst the allies of the Ma^cādīd were the Al Sudān³ tribesmen who lived in Qatar. These tribesmen represented but one part of a very considerable tribe whose other members dwelt in Trucial Oman. In Qatar their base was Bida^c where they remained an influential community until 1867 when the town was razed.⁴ Another

1 Lorimer, IIB, 1112-13; and T.M. Johnstone and J.C. Wilkinson, 'Some Geographical Aspects of Qatar', The Geographical Journal, Vol. 126 (Dec. 1960), pp. 442-50.

2 Lorimer, IIA, 612-15.

3 Lorimer, IIB, 1842; A Handbook of Arabia, I, 330, 334, 337, 338, 340, 345 and 596; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 169, 204 & 205.

4 Until Bida^c was attacked by the Shaikhs of Bahrain and Abu Dhabi.

group of coastal dwellers in Qatar, the Āl Bū Kuwārah¹, claiming descent from the Banī Tamīm of Najd, but only a small tribe themselves, came to be closely allied to the Ma^cādīd through marriage. The Āl Bū ^cAinain² tribe founded part of Bida^c in the early nineteenth century, but subsequently moved to Ruwais and Fuwairit, finally settling at the port of Wakrah. This tribe belonged to the Āl Subaiḥ section of the Banī Khalīd.

When the Āl Khalīfa invaded Bahrain in 1783 they received assistance from various groups amongst the tribesmen of the mainland. These included elements from the Āl Musallam, the Āl Bū Kuwārah, the Āl b. Ali and the Al Sādah. In addition they were joined by supporters from other less numerous tribes, as the Al ^cAmāmīrah, Ziyā'inah, Al Mu^cāwdah, Āl Qumrah, Al Janā^cāt, Āl Banī Yatīl, Al Sulūtah, and the nomadic Āl Ka^cbān.³ Some members of each of these tribal groups decided to settle and make a living on the islands under the leadership of the Āl Khalīfa. They were rewarded for

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- 1 Lorimer, IIB, 1077. For the Banī Tamīm see Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 140-41.
- 2 Lorimer, IIA, 48, & IIB, 1013. Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 154-55; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 202 & 214-15.
- 3 Al ^cAmāmīrah: Lorimer IIA, 68; Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 154-55.
Al Ziyā'inah: " IIB, 1946; A Handbook of Arabia, I, 323.
Al Mu^cāwdah: " IIB, 1244; Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 178-86.
Āl Qumrah: " IIB, 1270 & 1564.
Al Janā^cāt: " IIA, 900-01.
Āl Banī Yatīl: " IIB, 935; Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 140-41.
Al Sulūtah: " IIB, 1843-4; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 204-5.
Al Ka^cbān: " IIA, 963.

their support with grants of land, and prospered at their customary pursuits of pearl fishing and trade.

The pattern of settlement established at the conquest did not remain static. The majority of tribesmen retained strong links with kinsmen on the mainland, where, in the case of the Āl Musallam Āl Bū Kuwārah and Al Sādah, the bulk of their tribes lived. The Āl b. Ali, having grown strong and prosperous as merchants and seafarers on the islands during the nineteenth century, a large number returned to the Qatar peninsula after 1895, as a result of a dispute with the Shaikh of Bahrain.¹ In 1883 the Al Sādah also contemplated moving to Darīn at Qatīf but were dissuaded by concessions from the Āl Khalīfa ruler.² The majority of the Al Janā^cāt moved to Kuwait during the nineteenth century, leaving just a handful of shopkeepers behind. The Al Sulūtah, meanwhile, made a temporary move back to Qatar, in 1869, having supported the losing faction of Āl ^cAbdallah in the Āl Khalīfa family feud, many of them returning in 1893.³

Members of other tribes arrived and settled on the islands after the initial conquest. The Al Dawāwdah⁴, the most

1 See Chapter 3, p. 154.

2 'Administration Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and the Muscat Political Agency', 1883-84, p. 7. Hereafter this work is referred to as 'Administration Report'.

3 Lorimer, IIB, 1843-44; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 204-5.

4 Lorimer, IIA, 1010-1014; A Handbook of Arabia, I, 84-5, & 608; Hamzah, pp. 154-56; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 212-14.

directly connected representatives of the Banī Khālīd to live in Bahrain, were actually recruited by the Āl Khalīfa to come as members of their official bodyguard, whilst the rest of their tribe remained as nomads in Hasā.

Some of the nomadic Al Madāhika¹ came to settle and the majority of the small Āl b. Maqlā tribe migrated from Qatar, as too the Manāni^cah², of Abū Dalūf in north western Qatar. Some of the Āl Bū Rumaih³, who mostly roamed the mainland with the Na^cīm also came. Two other small tribal allies of the Na^cīm, the Al Muraikhāt and Al Kibisah, also settled on the islands.⁴ The Na^cīm tribesmen themselves took to spending their summers on the islands and wintering near Zubāra. Lastly, some of the Dawāsir⁵, a major tribe of Central Arabia, made their way to the Gulf coast during the nineteenth century and from 1845, with the agreement of the Āl Khalīfa, established a virtually autonomous settlement on Bahrain, only to uproot and return to the mainland at the beginning of this century.

1 Lorimer, IIB, 1116; ARAMCO, Oman, p. 209.

2 Lorimer, IIB, 1162; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 205, 207 & 208.

3 Lorimer, IIB, 1600; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 208 & 212.

4 Al Muraikhāt: Lorimer, IIB, 1274 & 1305; ARAMCO, Oman, p. 209.
Al Kibisah: Lorimer, IIB, 1035-6; A Handbook of Arabia, I, 331-2; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 205-8.

5 Muhammad b. Khalīfa al-Nabhānī, al-Tuhfa al-Nabhāniyya fī Tārīkh al-Jazīra al-^cArabiyya (Cairo, 1924), VI, 42; Hereafter referred to as Al-Nabhānī. A Handbook of Arabia, I, 325.
Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 157-8.

The continual interchange between the tribesmen of the islands and those of the mainland, the shifting of allegiances and the regrouping of settlements interlocked Bahrain's affairs closely with those of the mainland. To retain power and prestige the Āl Khalīfa Shaikhs expected to maintain close contact with all their tribal neighbours and when threatened, sought to manipulate the process of migration and regrouping. In 1850, for example, the Shaikh of Bahrain actually resettled the much depleted Āl Musallam of Huwailah at Bida^c, the power base of the Āl Thānī in Qatar, to counter the predominance of the Al Sūdān.¹

The Āl Khalīfa² enhanced the wealth of Bahrain through trade, by exploiting the potential of two of the archipelago's natural advantages. It was situated at the centre of the richest pearling grounds of the Persian gulf, and its geographical location ideally placed it to act as an entrepôt for the surrounding area.

The pearl banks of the Gulf, commencing off Rās Tannūra, stretch eastwards to the north of Qatar, then follow the coastline south and span out into the centre of the Gulf, terminating parallel with Sharjah. The richest pearl beds of all occur in the waters off Bahrain and Rās Rakān. This gave the inhabitants primary opportunity to exploit the resources, whilst, by tradition, the ruler

1 Lorimer, IIB, 1282-83.

2 The origin and accomplishments of this family are discussed in Francis Warden's 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrain) from the year 1716 to the year 1817', Bombay Selections, Vol. 24, pp. 362-3. Henceforth this work will be referred to as 'Historical Sketch'. See also Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 117-8 & 165.

of Bahrain would expect to collect a tax from all the pearling boats fishing the banks, whether resident on the islands or making the journey for the season from other parts of the Gulf.¹ Merchants eager to purchase the yield would come even from distant places. Estimates of the annual value to Bahrain of the fishery vary considerably, but all indicate a steady growth from the end of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth.² In 1790 East India Company factors valued the annual export of pearls from Bahrain at 5 lakhs of rupees (£50,000).³ Drawing upon survey work completed in the 1820s, Lieutenant H.H. Whitelock estimated the yield throughout the Gulf in one season at 40 lakhs of rupees.⁴

Whitelock attributed 2,430 boats to Bahrain and its dependencies out of a total of 3,230 in the whole Gulf, during the

1 G.B. Brucks, 'Mémorial descriptif de la Navigation du Golfe de Perse', Bombay Selections, Vol. 24, p. 567. Henceforth this work will be referred to as 'Mémorial'. See also J.S. Buckingham, Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia (London, 1829), pp. 454-7. J.R. Wellsted, Travels in Arabia (London, 1838), I, p. 265. R. Le Baron Bowen Jr., 'Pearl Fisheries of the Persian Gulf', Middle East Journal, Vol. V (1951), p. 179. Henceforth this work will be referred to as 'Pearl Fisheries'.

2 For an estimate prior to the conquest of Bahrain by the Al Khalifa see Abraham Parsons, Travels in Asia and Africa (London, 1808), p. 202. (Parsons' journey took place in the 1770s):- "... the annual produce being seldom less than sixty thousand Bussora tomans, oftener more; some years it amounts to one hundred thousand, at thirty-seven shillings and six-pence per toman".

3 See Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 29.

4 H.H. Whitelock, 'An Account of the Arabs who inhabit ... the Pirate Coast', Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society, Vol. I (1844), pp. 32-54.

same period. Available evidence does suggest¹, however, that Bahrain's profits from the industry subsequently declined for a while, but this is attributed to internal dynastic problems, the potential remaining unchanged.

As regards Bahrain's capacity as an entrepôt, S.M. Zwemer wrote:

As Jiddah is the western port, Bahrain is the eastern port of Arabia. It is the gateway to the interior, the threshold of which is Hasa. Draw a line from Menama to Katif, then on to Hofhoof (or El Hassa) and thence back to Menamah and the triangle formed will include every important town or village of Eastern Arabia.²

Half way between the Gulf entrance at the straits of Hormuz and its head, Bahrain was ideally placed to capture the trade to and from the central sector of the adjacent Arabian coast. Buckingham noted not only the large community of wealthy merchants in Manāma, but also the traffic in manufactured goods and foodstuffs from India for distribution to the mainland, and the return trade in pearls.³ In the 1820s other commodities came to Bahrain from Persia, Oman, Basra and Yemen, and the islands exported twice as much as they were importing, though the exports consisted largely of pearls.⁴

Captain Kemball estimated that, in the late 1830s, only one fourth of Bahrain's foreign imports were for internal consumption.⁵

1 A.B. Kemball, 'Statistical & Miscellaneous information connected with the possessions, Revenues, Families, etc. ... of the Ruler of Bahrain', Bombay Selections, Vol. 24, p. 291.

2 S.M. Zwemer, Arabia: The Cradle of Islam (New York, 1900), p. 110.

3 Buckingham, op. cit., pp. 452-3.

4 Brucks, 'Mémorial', pp. 568-9. Figures are given in German crowns. Bahrain's total exports, including pearls: 1,651,900; excluding pearls: 51,900. Total imports were 807,300.

5 Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 105.

Offsetting Bahrain's peculiar merits, visiting Westerners denounced its climate as humid and debilitating.¹ For the Arabs of the area Bahrain's humidity was ameliorated by the convenience and quality of its fresh water supply.² Harbour facilities on Bahrain, similarly, had both advantages and disadvantages. Buckingham's description sums up its physical qualities:

The harbour is thus formed by these two islands, Bahrain and Muharrag, one lying north and south, and the other east and west; and good shelter is afforded by them from all but north-west winds. Though the approach to the harbour is rendered difficult by the foul ground, and shoals, yet, these being of coral, the water is so finely transparent as to admit of their being seen at a considerable distance which renders the navigation comparatively easy, requiring only careful hands stationed to look out aloft, and guide the vessel through them by the eye.³

Access was thus easy for small native craft of shallow draught, but impossible for large trading or war vessels. Goods and passengers were ferried inshore from an anchorage some distance out.

The proximity of the islands to the mainland - to Hasā to the south and west, and to the Qatar peninsula to the east - presented the inhabitants of Bahrain with a constant problem of defence against plundering raids or full-scale invasion. Fortresses protected the

1 Ibid. See also J.T. Bent, 'The Bahrain Islands in the Persian Gulf', Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society (London, 1890), Vol. 12, p. 1.

2 James Morier, A Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor (London, 1812), p. 55. Brucks, 'Memoir', p. 567. Buckingham, op. cit., p. 457. In their previous homes at both Kuwait and Zubāra the Āl Khalīfa had been accustomed to fetch water outside their town, and that of poor quality.

3 Buckingham, op. cit., p. 453. See also Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 107. A more reliable technical description of the harbour can be found in Admiralty, The Persian Gulf Pilot (London, 1915), pp. 124 & 127-8.

towns of Manāma and Muharraḡ, and the sizeable Āl Khalīfa fleet was adaptable for conflict as well as trade. This could not, however, prevent the landing of forces in small boats from the shallow waters around the southern coasts of the archipelago, particularly at night.¹ Consequently the Āl Khalīfa rulers had to handle their political relations with the mainland with care and foresight. With resources unmatched on the mainland except at the oases of Hasā and Qatīf, and with its overall control of trade in the area, Bahrain was an attractive target. Having themselves invade Bahrain from Zubāra in Qatar, the Āl Khalīfa had first-hand knowledge of their own vulnerability, and they maintained close connections with the mainland which were not always amicable.

The Āl Khalīfa were one of the three family groups that comprised the ^cUtūb², the others being the Āl Ṣabāḡ and the Āl Jalāhima.³ The ^cUtūb, in turn, were a branch of the ^cAnazah tribe, and had made their way to the northern shores of the Gulf at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Having roamed the area in search of a place to settle⁴ the ^cUtūb were finally given sanction to reside in Kuwait by the powerful Banī Khālīd (of the Rabī^ca tribe) who were then in overall command of the whole Hasā region.⁵ The

1 Brucks, 'Memoir', p. 568; Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 107; E.C. Ross, 'Administration Report', 1874-75, p. 48.

2 Al-Nabhānī, pp. 117-8; 'Abdul ^cAzīz al-Rashīd, Tārīkh al-Kuwait (Beirut, 1966), pp. 31, 33, 106-7, & 112; Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 45-61.

3 Warden, 'Historical Sketch', pp. 362-4.

4 Al Nabhānī, p. 119; Al-Rashīd, op. cit., pp. 35-6 & 112. Sinān, op. cit., pp. 117-26.

5 Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

Āl Sabāh section established themselves as the administrators of Kuwait, whilst the Āl Khalīfa, who inclined rather to commerce, set out anew in 1766 in search of a settlement of their own, nearer the pearl fisheries.¹ Led by Khalīfa b. Muḥammad, they landed at Bahrain, but the inhabitants prevented them from staying.² The islands were then under the control of the Abū Shahr Arabs, under Persian suzerainty.³ Consequently the Āl Khalīfa settled instead at Zubāra on the north-eastern coast of Qatar.

The Qatar peninsula was desolate and inhospitable, affording only some sparse grazing and a few fishing villages on the coastline, notably Huwailah, Fuwairit and Bida^c. The Āl Khalīfa constructed an independent and fortified settlement⁴, and rapidly developed a trading community in Zubāra to rival those of the other important ports in the Gulf. The appeal of the new entrepôt to traders was enhanced by the complete absence of customs duties there, these being charged at varying rates at the other Gulf ports.⁵

The new-born prosperity of Zubāra under the Āl Khalīfa excited jealousy and animosity. Prominent among the aggrieved was Shaikh Naṣr al-Madhkur, who was both governor of Bushire and overlord of

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- 1 Robert Taylor, 'Extracts from Brief Notes, containing Historical and other information connected with ... the Persian Gulf', Bombay Selections, Vol. 24, p. 26. Hereafter this work will be referred to as 'Extracts from Brief Notes'. Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 64-7.
 - 2 Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 66-7.
 - 3 Niebühr, op. cit., II, 153.
 - 4 Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 70-1.
 - 5 Lorimer, IB, 789; Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 72-3.

Bahrain. In sympathy with Nasr were the Ka^cab of Arabistan, who were already at variance with the ^cUtūb of Kuwait. From 1777 onwards Zubāra became the object of outright attack under their joint auspices.¹ The Shi^cite inhabitants of Bahrain itself, the Bahārīna, also appear to have been unfriendly towards the Sunni traders from Zubāra.²

In 1782 the mounting tension came to a head³ when the Bahārīna were implicated in the death of an Āl Khalīfa tribesman at Sitra. The tribe took retribution by a raid on the islands. Shaikh Nasr in turn organised a siege of Zubāra. The Āl Khalīfa drove him back only with the assistance of some of the Āl b. Ali tribesmen of Qatar. Although the Zand dynasty in Shiraz was struggling for its survival⁴, it was likely that Shaikh Nasr and his associates, the Ka^cab and the Qawāsīm (of Rās al-Khaima), would rally independently to the attack once more.⁵ Meanwhile, after a sortie to the Bahrain islands, the Āl Sabāh reported to their Āl Khalīfa kinsmen that the defences were in poor condition.⁶ The Āl Khalīfa thereupon seized the opportunity. They rallied support from their ^cUtubī kinsmen, including the Āl Jalāhima, and such Qatari tribes as chose to link fortunes with them,

1 Lorimer, IB, 788.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 26-7.

3 Warden, 'Historical Sketch', p. 364; Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 27.

4 Wilson, The Persian Gulf, p. 188.

5 Abu Hakima, op. cit., pp. 110-11.

6 Warden, 'Historical Sketch', p. 364; Lorimer, IB, 839; Abu Hakima, op. cit., p. 108.

and, after a siege of two months the Persian garrison of Manāma capitulated.¹

The circumstances of the conquest of Bahrain by the Āl Khalīfa to some extent conditioned the hostilities which the new rulers had to face subsequently. By capturing the islands they had strengthened their position in terms of wealth, prestige and self-defence. As has been noted, some of the Qatari tribesmen who had lent their support in the conquest, committed themselves fully to the Āl Khalīfa after the victory, and moved over to settle on the islands. Yet, by outwitting their enemies from the Persian littoral, the Āl Khalīfa had by no means eliminated them. As time passed, and their hold on the islands became more entrenched and they prospered, the jealousy of their neighbours and rivals magnified. Within their own tribe, meanwhile, the Āl Jalāhima presented an especially irksome problem. The cooperation between the two families during the conquest of Bahrain proved short-lived, and, dissatisfied and resentful, the Āl Jalāhima retired to Qatar where they settled at Khaur Hasan, north of Zubāra. From this base they harassed and plundered the commercial traffic of their relatives.² Shaikh Rahmah b. Jābir, their head, became notorious for his daring as a pirate.³ Furthermore, under his leadership, Khaur Hasan became a rallying point for all who sought to reduce the Āl Khalīfa.⁴

1 See Lorimer, IB, 839-40, for the locations in Qatar from which the various tribal forces were drawn.

2 Warden, 'Historical Sketch', p. 365. Abu Hakima, op. cit., p. 182.

3 Buckingham, op. cit., pp. 356-8.

4 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 27.

After the conquest the Āl Khalīfa did not regard Bahrain as their sole base and sphere of influence. Zubāra was not suddenly evacuated: the change-over to Bahrain as the principal domicile and base took place over the subsequent decade, the leading Shaikh, Ahmad, continuing to spend his winters in Zubāra until his death in 1796. With time, however, their attention and interests were concentrated more exclusively in the islands, and their own form of government and administration took shape there.

The administrative requirements of an island community devoted to commerce and increasingly cosmopolitan, but with strong tribal elements, were met, not with any carefully structured system, but on an ad hoc basis. Bahrain's government was a personal one in the hands of the leading Shaikh of the Āl Khalīfa, yet, as Abu Hakima describes it: "The tribal authority of the shaikhs was strong, but because of the commercial nature of the ^CUtbī States, the shaikhs were less despotic than might be expected".¹ The first Shaikh to have charge of Bahrain was Ahmad b. Khalīfa, who, as mentioned, spent much of his time at Zubāra. It appears that his authority was therefore represented on the islands by his two sons Salmān and ^CAbdallah, who handled the day-to-day business of government. When, on Ahmad's death in 1796, the brothers agreed to rule jointly, they instigated a practice of shared responsibility for governmental duties between the head of the family and a brother, which was repeated by subsequent Āl Khalīfa rulers. Also, by continuing to live on the islands

1 Abu Hakima, op. cit., p. 181.

after Ahmad's death, at Rifā^c and Muharraḡ, they transferred the centre of the Āl Khalīfa shaikhdom permanently to Bahrain.

That ^cAbdallah, the younger brother, and strictly speaking the assistant ruler only, outlived Shaikh Salmān, led to a complication in the hereditary succession to leadership of the Āl Khalīfa.

^cAbdallah took over control, allowing his nephew Khalīfa b. Salmān to succeed to only half the revenues of the Shaikhdom. After the latter's death in 1834, however, ^cAbdallah's grand-nephews Muhammad and Ali managed, following a civil war, to supplant ^cAbdallah's leadership with their own: so that the right of primogeniture prevailed. It was however ^cIsā b. Ali, the son of the younger nephew, who assumed the leadership subsequently, from 1869 to 1923.¹ Succession was thus hereditary, but primogeniture did not necessarily prevail. Other factors, such as strength of tribal and military support, or attainment of an important executive role, also influenced the succession.²

The responsibilities and benefits of authority were not restricted entirely to the Shaikh and his chosen assistant. Other

1 For genealogies of the Āl Khalīfa, see:

- i) Kemball, attached to his 'Memorandum on the Resources'.
- ii) E.C. Ross, P/775, May 1875, p. 371.
- iii) E.C. Ross, Appendix B to Part I of 'Administration Report' of 1882-3.
- iv) Lorimer, I, Part 3.

2 A useful sources for details on how the Āl Khalīfa Shaikhs organised their administrative duties, with the aid of their fraternal assistants, may be found in the biographical file prepared by the native agent in Bahrain in 1883, R/15/1/186.

leading members of the Āl Khalīfa family would expect to take charge of the different territories of the Shaikhdom as "fiefs", where they were "almost independent" for life, collecting their own taxes and dictating jurisdiction.¹ It appears that these were not automatically hereditary, and could be redispensed by the ruler.²

The relationship between the Shaikh and the leading tribes within his shaikhdom was similarly dictated by prevailing circumstances and by whether or not the interests of both parties coincided on a particular issue. In particular, the Shaikh's position was less firm on the mainland.³ In certain instances the Shaikh could direct tribal politics to the extent of ordering the complete resettlement of a whole community in a new location.⁴ On the other hand, the Shaikh could be thwarted in his intentions by the threat of an important tribal group to transfer its allegiance elsewhere.⁵ Under arrangements similar to those with his family, the Shaikh allotted lands to the leaders of tribes settled on the islands.⁶ The Shaikh also distributed "gifts", or a type of retainer, to the unpredictable and shifting bedouin elements in his shaikhdom. Their services in battle could be enlisted, at a price; though if victory looked doubtful, bedouin loyalty could not be relied upon whatever the initial inducement had been.⁷

1 Lorimer, IIA, 248.

2 The term 'fief' was introduced by unqualified British translators to render the Arabic term 'al Nakhīl', which means date groves.

3 Lorimer, IB, 794.

4 Warden, 'Historical Sketch', p. 377; Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 108.

5 Lorimer, IB, 795. See also Kelly, Eastern Arabian Frontiers, p. 18.

6 Taylor, 'Extracts from Brief Notes', p. 29.

7 Lorimer, IIA, 252. See also Kelly, Eastern Arabian Frontiers, p. 18.

Tribal traditions and usages also contributed a degree of continuity to the operation of government in Bahrain. Confusion or maladministration were often not due to a seeming lack of organisation, but rather to personal factors: a break in the cohesion of the Āl Khalīfa family, or weakness or shortsightedness on the part of the Shaikh himself. Captain Kemball reported such a breakdown in the 1840s:

Since [1839], owing to the increased dissensions, and subsequent hostilities between the members and relatives of the ruling family, the population, prosperity and commerce of the island have gradually declined.

Numbers of the principal and most wealth inhabitants, to avoid the effects of increased anarchy and confusion, fled upon the commencement of actual hostilities, to Koweit on the Arabian, and Lingah and other places on the Persian Coast, where they have since temporarily located themselves, in order to watch the course of events, and return with the first signs of peace and established government, and consequent security to life and property.¹

The leading figures in Bahrain's mercantile community brought their own particular influence to bear on the style of administration which rendered it distinct from more strictly tribal governments in the heart of Arabia. Their primary concern was with efficient and peaceful trading, and the results of this interest were most visible in the institutions of the judiciary. Special facilities for all disputes arising in connection with the pearl fisheries were provided by convening the "Sālifat-al-Ghaus" or "Diving Court".² The financial arrangements between all those involved in both investing-in and operating pearl-fishing were complex, though there was a

1 Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 106.

2 Lorimer, I, Part 2, 223⁴; Bowen, 'The Pearl Fisheries', p. 179.

generally accepted procedure.¹ When a dispute over financial commitments did arise, it was best resolved by men familiar with the workings of the industry and generally respected for their knowledge and judgment, and the Sālifa was composed of such men.

Over the years of the Āl Khalīfa rule in Bahrain, an additional court, the "Majlis-al-^cUrfī" or "Majlis al-Tijārah"², was devised and developed, to adjudicate in other mercantile cases, especially those involving foreigners. The "Sālifat-al-Ghaus" was a feature common to all the Arab pearling communities, but the Majlis was peculiar to Bahrain. Theories conflict as to whether it was originally suggested by the British, who certainly came to play an important part in running it, or whether it was a purely indigenous invention.³ What is important, however, is that it was developed, and operated, thereby facilitating easy relations between the different nationalities whose presence enhanced the prosperity of the islands as a whole.

Very much at the bottom of the social strata under the Āl Khalīfa rule were the Bahārīna, the indigenous Shi^cite inhabitants who had shown little friendship to the Āl Khalīfa traders when they first settled at Zubāra. They were of mixed Arab origin and

1 Buckingham, *op. cit.*, p. 455; Lorimer, IB, 2233-4; Bowen, 'The Pearl Fisheries', p. 177; George Rentz, 'Pearling in the Persian Gulf', *Semitic and Oriental Studies*, ed. E.J. Fischel (London, 1951), p. 399 & n. 36.

2 Meaning customary or commercial tribunal: See Lorimer, IIA, 250.

3 Lorimer, IIA, 250, n. 2.

constituted the largest distinguishable group within the total population.¹ They were relegated to the position of virtual serfs, supplying the agricultural work-force for the Shaikh and his retinue.² They held the land they worked usually only in return for unpaid labour or "Sukhrah"³, and they were also assessed for service according to their possessions, such as boats and animals. There was thus little incentive for them to improve their lot and those who did manage to purchase their own gardens could not look forward to a more prosperous future without living in fear that any day a local magnate, including the Al Khalīfa shaikhs themselves, might take it upon himself to appropriate the holding. Furthermore, if the bedouin tribesmen stole the property of the Bahārīna, the latter could not rely on the Al Khalīfa to enforce reparation on their behalf.⁴

Most nineteenth-century observers estimated the population of Bahrain at approximately 60,000, although this figure fluctuated somewhat with the political situation and the security of property.⁵ It was commonly asserted that in this population the Bahārīna equalled or outnumbered the Sunnī tribesmen and foreign traders.⁶

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- 1 W.G. Palgrave, Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia (London, 1865), II, 211; Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 29.
 - 2 Palgrave, op. cit., II, 210; also Captain Durand's 'Note on Bahrain', L/P&S/18/B95; Lorimer, IIA, 248.
 - 3 Lorimer, IIA, 248.
 - 4 Lorimer, Ibid., 248-9.
 - 5 Brucks, 'Memoir', p. 566; Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', II, p. 106. See also Palgrave, op. cit., II, 211 & 216; Zwemer, op. cit., p. 99.
 - 6 Brucks, when estimating the total population at 60,000 in 1829, also calculated that the Bahārīna constituted 45,000 of the total. 'Memoir', p. 566.

Amongst the foreign communities, the long-established Indian traders, known as banians or banias, came mainly from the western regions of Gujerat and Cutch.¹ Chiefly interested in the pearl trade, their numbers would increase during the pearl season, and they enjoyed the greatest wealth amongst Bahrain's trading community, alongside the handful of European merchants. The banians enjoyed an amicable relationship with the Āl Khalīfa generally, especially since they were in a position to advance the Shaikh a loan if necessary. The British presence in India, meanwhile, led to close cooperation between them and the banians, the latter operating Indian trade under the protection of the former.²

The Persian population, though more numerous, enjoyed more modest prosperity, operating as entrepreneurs and small shopkeepers.³ They appear to have practised their Shi^cite faith without interference, their religious leaders and ^cUlamā⁻⁴ holding a recognized status in the urban community as a whole.

Less fortunate in respect of religious toleration was the small Jewish community in Bahrain. They were the first to suffer in times of political upheaval, and were so victimised during the troubled 1860s that they temporarily withdrew from the islands.⁵ Their

1 Buckingham, op. cit., pp. 379-80; Palgrave, op. cit., II, 211-12.

2 Brucks, 'Memoir', p. 566.

3 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, No. 421, 17 December 1904, L/P&S/10/81, p. 2; Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, No. 180, 23 April 1905, Ibid.

4 H.A.R. Gibb & J.H. Kramers, Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, 1974), p. 599.

5 Palgrave, op. cit., II, 216. See also: F.B. Prideaux to S.G. Knox, 4 August 1906, R/15/5/60.

periodic persecution was, however, a problem faced by the Jewish traders in most of the Gulf ports, and not unique to Bahrain.¹

Two sizeable groups in Bahrain's community complete the picture. There were in Bahrain, as in the nearby Hasā and Qatar, a large number of Hūwala² Arabs who had migrated to the Persian shores of the Gulf many generations previously, and subsequently returned, having lost their tribal identity and organisation. In Bahrain, as elsewhere, they tended to avoid political involvement and assimilate themselves readily into the general community, devoting themselves to earning a modest living from trade.³ Although they constituted the most numerous single group of Sunnis in the archipelago, they were seldom in the limelight. Lastly, the Mawālī⁴, numbered by Lorimer in the early 1900s at several thousand⁵, were the African slaves and liberated slaves who dwelt in Bahrain. They provided large numbers of divers during the pearling season. Those that were free usually followed the religion and lifestyle of their Arab neighbours.

Clearly the wealth for which the islands were famous was by no means evenly distributed throughout the community. Following their conquest of Bahrain, the Āl Khalīfa appear to have developed a range of revenues to tap specific sources of wealth. There was no distinction between personal and public money accruing to the Shaikh.

1 Buckingham, op. cit., p. 375.

2 For their origin and distribution see Lorimer, IIA, 754-5. Also Wahbar, op. cit., p. 104; ARAMCO, Oman, pp. 205-6.

3 Lorimer, IIA, 240-1.

4 Lorimer, IIB, 1160-1; Al-Nabḥānī, op. cit., pp. 55-6; Wahbah, op. cit., p. 104.

5 Lorimer, IIA, 241.

In the nature of tribal government the needs and expenses of the shaikh were synonymous with those of the administration to a large degree. As mentioned previously the ruler of Bahrain could expect to receive a sizeable income from taxes charged to all boats participating in the pearl fishery in return for his protection in Bahrain's waters. In addition the Shaikh and his family themselves owned a fleet of boats used both for trade and on the pearl fisheries. Apart from an experiment in levying regular customs during the 1830s¹, abandoned after seven years, the first system of duties was not introduced until 1860², by which time priorities had altered. Prior to this date it served the interests of the Āl Khalīfa better to generate wealth in their dominions by enticing traders away from other Gulf ports. This wealth could then be drawn upon through other channels. Accordingly, the Āl Khalīfa shaikh would charge a rental on town lands, shops and khans. Whenever the people of Bahrain sought recourse to the courts for the settlement of their affairs, the Shaikh charged a judicial fee.³ The agricultural land beyond the limits of the towns provided a further source of revenue. Agricultural dues were charged to parallel the rents on town dwellings and businesses, whilst in the case of the date plantations on the islands, the Āl Khalīfa took direct possession of most of them, regardless of previous ownership, thus transferring all the profits to themselves.⁴ In those areas where the Shaikh had

1 Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 105.

2 Wilson, op. cit., p. 248.

3 Lorimer, IIA, 251.

4 Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 105: and Kemball, 'Statistical', p. 291.

granted out all fiscal rights and administrative duties to various of his relatives or important tribal leaders, the Shaikh was still entitled to a succession duty on estates transferred by inheritance.¹

Potentially these various sources of revenue could produce a sizeable income. The Shaikh's requirements were, however, also sizeable. He had to find the administrative costs of his Dīwān², to maintain a large family and their households, and his personal bodyguard, at least a couple of hundred armed men, were paid and housed by the Shaikh. Of great importance to the Shaikh in his role as ruler was the capacity to entertain in his Majlis³ more lavishly and grandly than anyone within his following, and the offering of hospitality to visitors was a fundamental part of tribal life and rule.

Lastly, the Shaikh frequently had to cement the loyalty of the bedouin tribesmen with various shrewd displays of generosity.⁴ The expensive needs of the Shaikh, added to the difficulties he could encounter in the collection of his financial entitlements, meant that the Āl Khalīfa rulers were often short of money. In such instances they usually levied forced contributions from the weakest sections of

1 Lorimer, IIA, 251.

2 For the meaning and usage of the term Dīwān see: H.L. Gottschalk, 'Dīwān', The Encyclopaedia of Islam (London, 1965), II, 323-37.

3 For Majlis and its distinction from Dīwān see: Ameen Rihani, Ibn Sa'oud of Arabia (London, 1928), p. 15, n. 1. This is where the ruler usually held his daily reception and occasionally declared his policies. See Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 400.

4 Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 105; Lorimer, IIA, 251.

the community.¹ In this way were the Jews hounded out of Manāma.² The brunt of the burden fell, however, almost always on the Bahārīna first. Only they ever paid a poll tax, the "Taraz", in Bahrain.³

Thus the internal administration of the Bahrain islands took shape gradually over a period of years. Furthermore, the effectiveness and efficiency of the machinery of government, centred as it was on the person of the Shaikh and his immediate family, depended on the fortunes of the Āl Khalīfa shaikhs and the security of the islands generally in the wider context of Gulf politics. The protection of Bahrain against the covetous encroachments of other powers in the Gulf was a constant problem for the Āl Khalīfa. In their efforts to preserve their autonomy during the first half of the nineteenth century, successive shaikhs attempted to capitalize on the preoccupation of the British forces in the Gulf with the maintenance of peace and order in those waters, while the British were initially very reluctant to involve themselves in Bahrain's problems.

Trade had first brought Englishmen to the Gulf in the sixteenth century. Facilitating communication between the Mediterranean and the Far East, the Gulf had been used for centuries as a route for commercial traffic between distant ports.⁴ In addition, the ports of the Gulf handled valuable local products, including the pearls of

1 Kemball, 'Memorandum on the Resources', p. 105.

2 Palgrave, op. cit., II, 216.

3 Lorimer, IIA, 252.

4 Wilson, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

Bahrain. Yet the British commercial penetration of the Gulf produced unforeseen results. By the middle of the nineteenth century the British had become the dominant political power in the Gulf.

This political overlordship took time to evolve. British commercial activity in the Gulf was primarily under the auspices of the East India Company, which certainly in its early days, undertook a political role in the Gulf only with reluctance and as a concern secondary to commercial profit.¹

The political activity of the East India Company in the Gulf began to expand significantly in the late eighteenth century, as a by-product of its increasing power in the Indian sub-continent.² As the British empire in India expanded, so did the concern to protect it from possible invasion. The traditional invasion route to India was from the north-west. Thus Afghanistan, Persia and the Gulf, were seen as the critical areas, particularly in the period between 1798 and 1807 when Napoleon Bonaparte sought to use the area now referred to as the "Middle East" as a springboard to invade India.³ From this time it became one of the primary objectives of British policy in the Gulf to prevent any power using the area as a base for the invasion of their eastern possessions⁴, or disrupting the communications between Britain and India which passed through the Gulf.

1 ^c Abdul Amīr Amīn, British Interests in the Persian Gulf (Leiden, 1967), pp. 1 & 23.

2 Robert Geran Landen, Oman since 1856 (Princeton, 1967), p. 165; Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 1.

3 J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East (Princeton, 1956), I, xvi.

4 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 62-3.

Even after Napoleon's death, in 1821, the British continued to fear a French attack via the "Middle East".¹

The increasing political importance of the Gulf was reflected in a series of changes in the status of the East India Company's establishments in the area. In 1763 the Company founded a trading settlement at Bushire on the Persian coast of the Gulf.² In 1812 this commercial residency was replaced by a political agency. In 1822 the Company's "factors" and "brokers" in the Gulf were renamed "residents" and "native agents" and the whole establishment made a change. From this period onwards, the authority to maintain order in the Gulf was very largely in the hands of the Resident at Bushire, who, from 1862, was known officially as the "Political Resident".³

In his role as peacemaker and policeman of the Gulf, the Resident was acting in accordance with a policy developed primarily to safeguard India and her communications. In this function the Resident reported to the Government of Bombay and thence to the Government of India.⁴ There was, however, another function which the Resident undertook, that did not necessarily combine readily with the first. His appointment as Resident was coupled with that of

1 Gerald S. Graham, Great Britain in the Indian Ocean (Oxford, 1967), pp. 2-3.

2 Amin, op. cit., p. 70.

3 Rupert Hay, The Persian Gulf States (Washington, 1959), p. 12.

4 After 1873 the Government of Bombay relinquished control of the Gulf Residency to the Government of India direct.

Consul-General for Fars and Khuzistan. In this capacity the Resident was under the jurisdiction of the British Minister to Persia in Tehran, and thence to the Foreign Office. Depending on the issues with which the Resident was faced, meanwhile, he might find it necessary to make direct contact with the British political agent in Basra, who reported to London via a totally separate chain of command, through H.M. Consul-General in Baghdad, the Ambassador in Constantinople, and thence to the Foreign Office.

That the Gulf Resident should find it difficult to fulfil his roles simultaneously, stemmed from the fact that British imperial policy towards the Ottoman Empire, or the Egypt of Muhammad Ali, or the Shah of Persia was influenced by more considerations than just the defence of India: yet Bombay expected him to have this concern uppermost. When the interests of the Indian government diverged from wider imperial policies, the matter had to be settled in Whitehall. From 1784 until 1858 Cabinet authority over the East India Company's administration and diplomacy was exercised through the Board of Control, or India Board. After the Company's responsibilities were assumed directly by the Crown in 1858, a Secretary of State succeeded the President of the India Board as the representative of India in the Cabinet, and the "double government" of Board and Company was reconstituted in the new India Office.

Clearly, for issues to receive attention at all levels of the various command structures took considerable time, and sometimes led to argument. This made the position of the Resident doubly taxing when speedy decisions or immediate action were required on the spot. Furthermore, the divergence of interests led to repeated wrangles as

to which of his superiors - the Government of India or the Foreign Office - were responsible for financing different aspects of the British policy in the Gulf. Thus the development of a comprehensive British policy on Gulf matters was often impeded by the complexity of the structure by which decisions were made.

Acting on fundamentally commercial interests, Britain's political involvement in the affairs of the Shaikhdoms of the Arab coast originated in an attempt to safeguard their own or Indian commercial traffic from disruption or theft. Once the British undertook a degree of responsibility for Gulf affairs they discovered that it was extremely difficult to prevent that responsibility from growing.

Having traded in the Gulf for centuries the British were familiar with the risks of entanglement with marauders and pirates.¹ From 1804-5 onwards, however, the East India Company records show an increase in the number of attacks on shipping at the entrance to the Gulf, attributed to one particular group of maritime Arabs known collectively as the Qawāsim.² This group came from that part of Arabia which came to be known as the Trucial Coast (now the U.A.E.), and designated at the time as the Pirate Coast. Life on these shores was exceptionally hard at the best of times and plundering shipping was an opportune way of supplementing a meagre income.³

1 Niebuhr, op. cit., II, 383; Abraham Parsons, op. cit., p. 208; Morier, op. cit., p. 371; J.R. Wellsted, Travels to the City of the Caliphs (London, 1840), I, 127; Low, op. cit., I, Chapters 4 & 5; Amin, op. cit., p. 73; P.J. Marshall, East Indian Fortunes (Oxford, 1976), p. 61.

2 For background to the formation and location of this group see Lorimer, IIB, 1547.

3 Whitelock, loc. cit., p. 32; Wellsted, City of the Caliphs, I, 101.

At the turn of the century the Qawāsim were engaged primarily in recurrent struggles with their much more prosperous neighbours in Muscat.¹ During the first two decades of the nineteenth century they became increasingly daring in their attacks on shipping bearing British Indian trade as well. The escalation in their piratical activities stemmed from the influence exercised upon the Qawāsim by the Wahhābī dynasty of central Arabia at this time, and also from the dilatoriness of the British authorities in formulating an effective response.²

The British Indian authorities debated the issue at length with both their representatives in the Gulf and the Government in Whitehall.³ The guiding principle from 1819 was the suppression of piracy in Gulf waters, yet without interfering in Arab affairs or adopting responsibility from them more than was absolutely necessary to achieve that end. In 1819-20 an expedition under Major-General Sir William Grant Keir was sent against the pirate strongholds on the Arabian coast and proved to be effective.⁴ As a result, the Shaikhs of the Trucial Coast were obliged to undertake to abide by the conditions laid down in a General Treaty of Peace in January 1820 for the cessation of "plunder and piracy by land and sea forever".⁵

1 S.B. Miles, The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf (London, 1966), p. 275. See also Warden, 'Historical Sketch', p. 301.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 106 & 110; see also Low, op. cit., I, p. 317; H. Moyse-Bartlett, The Pirates of Trucial Oman (London, 1966), p. 23.

3 The arguments and proposals mooted in this debate may be found in Kelly's summary of the discussions of 1818-20 in Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 139-49.

4 For an account of the expedition see: Low, op. cit., I, 351-65; Wilson, op. cit., pp. 207-8.

5 Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 245.

The Āl Khalīfa of Bahrain were in fact included in this Treaty.¹ Whilst not actively engaged in piracy themselves, they had acted as receivers of the property plundered by the Qawāsim, gave them free access to Bahrain ports and supplied them with provisions.² Also, as will be seen shortly, the fact that Bahrain suffered intermittent invasions and attacks, had contributed to the general turmoil and disorder in the Gulf, which in turn promoted the growth of piracy.³ However, Bahrain's political circumstances were too complicated for the limited scope of British policy at that time, and in the development of the Trucial System after the first treaty of 1820, it was decided to exclude the Āl Khalīfa and their problems.

During the 1820s, it became clear that the General Treaty was insufficient, in respect of all its signatories, to preserve the safety of commerce in the Gulf. By Article 2, the General Treaty was specifically declared not to cover acts of "acknowledged war", defined as "that which is proclaimed, avowed, and ordered by government against government".⁴ In the name of "acknowledged war" many acts of piracy by the vessels of one Arab shaikhdom on those of another continued to be committed, especially during the pearling season.⁵

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- 1 In 1816, Lieutenant Bruce, then Resident at Bushire, concluded with the Shaikh of Bahrain an informal agreement, which was not authorized by the British Government, in which the Shaikh was assured of "the neutrality and even friendship of Britain". Lorimer, *IB*, p. 844.
 - 2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 165.
 - 3 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 142.
 - 4 Wilson, op. cit., p. 209.
 - 5 Wilson, Ibid., p. 209.

In 1835 Captain Hennell, then acting Resident at Bushire, inaugurated the "Trucial System" with the Arab shaikhs of the Pirate Coast, which sought to contain maritime warfare within strict limits, and hence reduce the incidence of piracy and disruption of trade, whilst still adhering to the principle of minimum interference in the concerns of the Arab states. By the Maritime Truce of 1835 the Arab shaikhs undertook to refrain completely from hostilities at sea within a period of six months covering the pearling season. In the event of a breach in the Truce, the Resident or the Commander of the Gulf Squadron was to be notified and he would take the necessary steps to obtain redress, the shaikhs themselves relinquishing their claims to revenge. In addition no battles or hostilities should take place at any time in the main channel of Gulf shipping, namely, beyond a "Restrictive Line" demarcating the Arab coastal waters from the main traffic route, and the Persian coast.¹

The benefits thus enjoyed by both parties led to a mutual agreement to repeat the Truce annually until 1843, when it was prolonged for a period of ten years. The system gradually produced a more stable outlook amongst the Trucial Shaikhs. Aside from intermittent skirmishes, they had enjoyed the fruits of peace during the pearling seasons, with the knowledge that quarrels could always be fought out if necessary on the expiration of the Truce, and often the desire to go to war faded with the postponement. Consequently, in May 1853, the Trucial Shaikhs and the British made a comprehensive

¹ Wilson, op. cit., p. 209; Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 358-9.

commitment and signed a Treaty of Peace in Perpetuity.¹ The "perfect maritime truce" was to be established "for evermore". The British, as previously, would organise the redress of all proven violations, yet with an additional pledge to supervise maritime peace at all times in the interests of preventing transgressions occurring at all.²

If, as its development indicated, the Trucial System operated reasonably effectively to preserve maritime peace between the Trucial Shaikhs, it would seem surprising that the Shaikhdom of Bahrain was not included in the arrangement after the first Treaty of 1820. This was, however, deliberate policy on the part of the British, arrived at for a number of complex reasons. Perhaps the key to the problem was that, in the words of J.B. Kelly, "To have admitted Bahrain to the Trucial System, then, would have been tantamount to assuming responsibility for her defence against her enemies, and these were numerous".³ Apart from disaffected sheikhs, the list of rival claimants to Bahrain during the nineteenth century included the Persian provincial government of Shiraz, the Āl Bū Sa'īd of Muscat, the Wahhābī power of Central Arabia and, on certain occasions, the Egyptians and the Turks.

Persia and Muscat had already fought over possession of the islands prior to the arrival of the Āl Khalīfa. The Shaikhs of Bushire on the Persian mainland had driven the Portuguese from Bahrain

1 Wilson, op. cit., p. 209; Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 363-4, 367-8 & 407-8.

2 Aitchison, op. cit., XI, No. XXIV, p. 253, Article 3.

3 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 380.

in 1602. In 1718 Sultān b. Saif II of Muscat managed to seize and hold the islands for a while. Control subsequently passed into the hands of the Huwaila Arabs until 1753, when the provincial government of Shiraz re-established control until 1783. In the years immediately following the Āl Khalīfa conquest of that date, Persia, although not ready to recognize the new dynasty in its own right, did not pose a serious threat. The attention of Fath Ali Shah was concentrated on the protection of his northern border against Russia: Shiraz suffered near civil war, and the Persians did not possess a naval force capable of effecting a reconquest. This last consideration was not, however, a problem for the Sayyids of Muscat. In 1800 Sultān b. Ahmad sent an expedition which overran the islands and forced the Āl Khalīfa to take flight. They subsequently recovered their position only to be ousted again in 1802. On this occasion the Āl Khalīfa sought the aid of the Wahhābī Amīr, ^cAbdul ^cAzīz I b. Muhammad, to force Sayyid Sultān to withdraw. The Āl Khalīfa offered submission in the form of a tribute, providing a precedent which was exploited by subsequent Wahhābī rulers.¹

From 1800 on, therefore, the Āl Khalīfa were virtually in a trap, preserving their independence only by playing off Oman and the warlike Wahhābīs against each other. They received a temporary respite from Wahhābī demands when in 1818, Ibrāhīm Pasha of Egypt invaded Arabia from the west and subdued the Āl Sa^cūd dynasty.²

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- 1 On the Wahhābī faith and the alliance of M. ^cAbdul Wahhāb with the Āl Sa^cūd dynasty see:- H. St. John Philby, Saudi Arabia (London, 1955). George Rentz, 'Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia', in Derek Hopwood ed. The Arabian Peninsula (London, 1972), pp. 54-66.
 - 2 For the 1818 Egyptian occupation of Arabia see:- Abd Al Hamid Al Batriq, 'Turkish and Egyptian Rule in Arabia 1810-41', Ph.D. thesis (London, 1947). Also R. Bayly Winder, Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1965), pp. 16-49.

Yet this meant that they had to find an alternative counterbalance to the ambitions of Oman, and they were aware that Persia, though powerless to tyrannise Bahrain alone, was taking a keen interest in the schemes of the other enemies of the islands.

It was at this juncture (the end of 1819) that the British presented the Āl Khalīfa with a possible alternative source of support. The Governor of Bombay, Mountstuart Elphinstone, was fully aware of the claims made to Bahrain by both Persia and Oman, and wishing to alienate neither, and to preserve maximum freedom of action, opted for a neutral approach:

... We should abstain from all interference in the pretensions which are advanced to the occupation of Bahrain, under a distinct explanation to the Shaikh of that island that so long as he restrains his tribe from the prosecution of acts of aggression on the high seas ... he may rely on experiencing from the British Government every degree of encouragement and of friendly intercourse ...¹

Effectively this formula not only excluded support of any of the rival claimants to Bahrain against the Āl Khalīfa, but also implied neutrality towards the incumbent rulers themselves. If the Āl Khalīfa kept the peace and cooperated with the British, they could expect a friendly response, but no guarantee of support against their enemies. Until this was spelt out to them, however, the Āl Khalīfa Shaikhs believed, or certainly maintained, that by signing the Treaty of Maritime Peace they had won the protection of British forces in the Gulf.

¹ Quoted in Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 162-3. For the result of Elphinstone's views see also pp. 164-6.

The issue was further clouded as a result of the embarrassing indiscretion of the Political Resident, Captain William Bruce, in 1822.¹ In complete contravention of the established British policy he drew up an agreement with the Governor of Shiraz recognizing Persian supremacy over the Bahrain islands, and promising assistance to the Persians to bring the Āl Khalīfa firmly under their authority. As soon as the existence of this treaty became known to the authorities in India, they emphatically repudiated both the treaty and the validity of Persia's claim, and withdrew Bruce from his post. His successor, Lieutenant McLeod, visited Bahrain in 1823, among other reasons, to assure Shaikh ^cAbdallah that Bruce's action had been an aberration and that the Government's policy remained unchanged.²

Despite the efforts of the British to explain their neutral position in relation to Bahrain's dynastic quarrels, however, the Āl Khalīfa shaikhs made repeated efforts to involve them. To the Āl Khalīfa the British presented the most attractive potential guardian in the Gulf. They possessed great military power, whilst apparently having no designs on the islands themselves. Yet, when the British repeatedly refused to give a guarantee for the full protection of the islands, the Āl Khalīfa shaikhs turned elsewhere for assistance.

1 For a translation of the text of the Treaty of Shiraz see:- Fereydoun Adamiyat, Bahrein Islands (New York, 1955), Appendix I, pp. 253-55. This author presents the case for the Persian claim to the islands.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 190-1, & n. 3. Kelly has refuted Adamiyat's contentions in his article:- 'The Persian Claim to Bahrain', International Affairs, Vol. 33, 1957, pp. 51-70. For further reading see also Majid Khadduri, 'Iran's Claim to the Sovereignty of Bahrain', American Journal of International Law, Vol. 45, 1951, pp. 631-47.

The threat to Bahrain from Muscat, having been the greatest danger during the early years of Āl Khalīfa rule, faded into the background after the 1820s. The last serious attempt at an invasion by the Sayyid of Muscat was repulsed by the Āl Khalīfa in 1828, and an agreement was eventually reached in December 1829 between the two belligerents whereby Sayyid Sa^cīd formally relinquished his claim to tribute from the islands. In the course of this episode Shaikh ^cAbdallah of Bahrain tried first of all to enlist British aid against Sa^cīd, and subsequently, to persuade the British to guarantee a peace between himself and Sa^cīd. Both attempts met with refusal, the British being prepared to do no more than act as mediators.¹

Threats to Bahrain continued from other quarters. By 1830 the Wahhābīs had regained their hold in central Arabia and the Amīr Turkī demanded among other things that the Āl Khalīfa resume the payment of zakāt which they had agreed to pay to ^cAbdul ^cAzīz at the beginning of the century. Again Shaikh ^cAbdallah asked the British to protect him, only to be told that British policy in the Gulf was concerned purely with the suppression of piracy and did not extend to the internal affairs of Arabia. Consequently, ^cAbdallah submitted to Amīr Turkī "in return for a guarantee ... of the territorial integrity of Bahrain".²

This settlement was short lived, however, and by 1831 ^cAbdallah

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 9, 22-3, & 380.

2 Ibid., pp. 229-30.

was blockading the Wahhābī supply ports of Qatīf and °Uqair. In the mid-nineteenth century the Wahhābīs suffered both internal struggles within the Āl Sa°ūd and renewed attacks by the Egyptians, but they did intermittently attempt to pursue their claims to Bahrain.

In the 1840s the Wahhābī Amīr Faisal sided with Shaikh Muhammad b. Khalīfa in his struggle to wrest power from his grand uncle Shaikh °Abdallah. The British refused °Abdallah help on this occasion in part because by then they found him uncooperative and unreliable, and were not averse to seeing him replaced by Muhammad.¹ Later, in 1851, Muhammad in his turn found himself threatened with an invasion by the Amīr Faisal, who had to raise money to pay zakāt to the Sharīf of Mecca.² On this occasion the British did not feel that they could disassociate themselves completely. They were still not prepared to give the Āl Khalīfa formal protection and, indeed, refused Muhammad's request that they intervene. Yet this refusal left Muhammad in desperate need of assistance and it emerged that he had previously opened negotiations with the Sharīf of Mecca, offering to put himself under Ottoman sovereignty.³

The Amīr Faisal, meanwhile, sent an emissary, Shaikh °Abdul °Azīz, to Captain Hennell. The Resident was ready to encourage friendly relations between Faisal and Muhammad, but no more than that, since Hennell believed that:⁴

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 381.

2 Ibid., p. 399.

3 Ibid., pp. 399-401.

4 Quoted Ibid., p. 401.

Of the connection subsisting between Ameer Fysul and the Ottoman Porte there can, I think, exist no doubt. Sheikh Abdool Azeez, while at Koweit, passed himself off to the Sheikh of that place as an envoy of Abbas Pasha of Egypt, and he also informed me that messengers from the Viceroy were now present with the Ameer.

Then the British squadron took up a position before Qatīf, where it remained until Faṣal and Muḥammad reached a peaceful agreement.¹

When, in 1854, hostilities flared up anew between Muḥammad b. Khalīfa and the Amīr Faṣal - acting in conjunction with the renegade Al Khalīfa shaikh, Muḥammad b. ^cAbdallah, who was based on the mainland at Dammām - the British were forced to examine their interests in more detail. Correspondence was exchanged between the British Resident, Captain Arnold B. Kemball, and Faṣal, which clarified the basic difference in viewpoints. Faṣal claimed Bahrain's subjects as his own, on the grounds that the Shaikh of Bahrain paid him an annual tribute. The British regarded Bahrain as an independent shaikhdom and that was the way they wanted it. They, therefore, considered the payment of tribute as either a purely religious matter, or else a levy paid by the Shaikh of Bahrain in respect only of his possessions in Qatar. It was on these possessions that the Wahhābīs could most easily exert influence, and because of this, and the inability of British naval power to affect events on the mainland, the British balked at taking full responsibility for protecting the independence of the Bahrain shaikhdom. A peace was concluded between the belligerents in 1855, which carefull avoided the subject of the significance of the zakāt.²

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 401-2.

2 For a full account of the events and details of the correspondence see Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 500-10.

Renewed Egyptian penetration of Arabia had the British seriously worried for a time.¹ In 1838-39 the forces of Khurshīd Pasha reconquered Najd and subjugated the Al Sa^cūd once more. Following the occupation of the Hasā coast the Egyptians demanded the submission of ^cAbdallah b. Ahmad of Bahrain and the resumption of the payment he had made previously to Riyadh. In anticipation of such a demand ^cAbdallah had offered the British the protection of Bahrain, but they preferred to deal with the Egyptians separately, warning that they could not stand aside if Khurshīd decided to press his claims by force. ^cAbdallah meanwhile tried to bargain his way out of a corner by approaching the Persians for help. The Persians failed to organise any practical assistance and eventually ^cAbdallah formally signed his submission to the Egyptian ruler.²

The British, annoyed at ^cAbdallah's surrender, foresaw similar capitulations from the Trucial Shaikhs as the Egyptians increased their power and prestige at the expense of the Ottoman Government. The advance of the forces of Ibrāhīm Pasha into the Ottoman dependencies in the Fertile Crescent had, however, reached the proportions of an international crisis, climaxing in the Egyptian defeat of the Turkish army in Syria, closely followed by the death of Sultan Mahmūd II and the defection of the Turkish fleet to Muhammad Ali in 1839. The international implications of the threat to the very existence of the Porte made the whole issue a matter for the Foreign Office rather

1 For Muhammad Ali's ambitions in Arabia about 1840 see: Kelly, 'Mehmet Ali's Expedition to the Persian Gulf 1837-1840', Part I, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. I, pp. 350-81, Part II, in Vol. II, pp. 31-65.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 303-5.

than just the Government of India.¹ Discussions took place at all levels as to what coercive action the British forces in the Gulf were capable of, if a major confrontation between them and Khurshīd Pasha could not be avoided. The possibility of occupying Bahrain as a British base was seriously considered.² Fortunately for the British in the Gulf the problem of Muhammad Ali was solved without their facing a confrontation there. By mid 1840 the Egyptians were withdrawing their forces from the Arabian peninsula to consolidate, and by the end of the year they had been decisively defeated by combined Turkish, British and Austrian forces in Syria.³

The assertion of a claim to Bahrain by the Porte held for the British similarly far-reaching implications for the balance of power in that part of the world. In 1851, under threat by the Amīr Faisal, Shaikh Muhammad b. Khalīfa offered to place himself under Turkish sovereignty. This was disturbing news, coming as it did on top of the Porte's announcement in 1849 that a small Turkish squadron was to take up police duties in the upper Gulf region. The Foreign Office informed the Porte that the British would not accept the subjection of Bahrain to Turkish authority. The Resident, Hennell, also sent the Gulf squadron to blockade the Hasā coast to check the intentions of the Amīr Faisal. The Turks did not press their claim to Bahrain.⁴

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- 1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 291-2 & 320.
For a general background on the international implications of the crisis see: M.S. Anderson, The Eastern Question (London, 1966), pp. 88-109.
 - 2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 316-30.
 - 3 For a general background on the campaigns of Muhammad Ali in Syria see: P.M. Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent (London, 1966), pp. 176-87.
 - 4 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 399-401.

Persian covetousness presented less of a problem, as Persia lacked both a navy and an approach to mainland possessions of the Āl Khalīfa. During the 1820s and '30s the Governor of Shiraz professed, almost annually, to be gathering an expedition to assert his claim over Bahrain. These endeavours never materialised into anything more than a useful excuse for the Prince Governor to raise levies from his dependencies.¹ The Persian threat became somewhat more troublesome, however, after the expulsion of Shaikh ^cAbdallah b. Ahmad from Bahrain in 1843. In return for Persian aid to reconquer the islands, he promised to make them a Persian dependency. The British responded with emphatic warnings to the Persian Government. In 1844 the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, wrote:²

Unless Persia can show that she has a clear indisputable right to the sovereignty of Bahrain, that she has exercised it without interruption under the dynasty of the Kajar family, and that consequently her present policy is directed to the maintenance of her lawful claims, and not to the assertion of a pretension not founded in law, Persia must be prepared to encounter in any scheme of this kind the active opposition of the British Government in India.

The efforts of the Persian Prime Minister, Hājī Mirzā Aghāsī, to explain Persia's right to Bahrain, drew on every possible argument, from Bruce's unauthorised treaty of 1822, to the assertion that the British habit of calling the Gulf "the Persian Gulf" implied a recognition of Persian sovereignty over all the islands. He failed to produce any irrefutable arguments. Despite further protests against British activities, not until 1860 did the Persians take any practical step to implement their claims.³

1 Kelly, 'The Persian Claim to Bahrain', op. cit., p. 59.

2 Quoted Ibid., p. 60.

3 Ibid., p. 61.

When in 1860 Muhammad b. Khalīfa (irked by British restrictions on his freedom of action) extended an invitation to Persia to become his protector, the Persians responded with enthusiasm. A Persian agent sailed for the islands, and soon after his arrival Muhammad formally pledged his loyalty to the Governor of Shiraz; the Persian flag was hoisted over Bahrain. Shaikh Muhammad had, however, taken the precaution of appealing also to the Turkish government through the Pasha of Baghdad. Shortly after the Persian flag had been hoisted an emissary arrived from Baghdad and Shaikh Muhammad, apparently unperturbed, arranged to put his shaikhdом under Turkish suzerainty, removed the Persian ensign and hoisted the Ottoman flag in its place. The fact that the agent from Shiraz refused either to depart, or to recognise the changed circumstances, could not restore credibility to Persia's claim.¹

The accumulated experience of the British in the Gulf during the first half of the nineteenth century taught them that the protection of their own interests necessitated participating in local Gulf politics to a far greater extent than they had initially envisaged. As regards the lower Gulf region they had developed the Trucial System with the local Arab shaikhs into a permanent undertaking. As regards Bahrain they had come to the conclusion that its independent status had to be preserved, even if they had to use force to protect the islands.² They had, however, fought shy of becoming involved directly with the internal problems of the Al Khalīfa shaikhs because these were so intricately entwined with

1 For a full account of the incident see:-
Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 515-17.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 521.

tribal and dynastic quarrels on the mainland, where the shaikhs still retained connections and possessions. By 1860 the British were ready to revise their views. They could feel satisfied that they had successfully averted the invasion or acquisition of Bahrain by her covetous neighbours on various occasions, and could expect to continue to do so. They concluded, however, that their efforts were wasted if the Shaikh of Bahrain was insensitive to the requirements of peaceful trading, courted the friendship of Turkey or Persia, and tended to aggravate his relations with his neighbours and mistreat foreign, especially British Indian, traders. This was their verdict on Shaikh Muhammad b. Khalīfa in 1860.

By this time there was little question of the British extricating themselves completely and relinquishing their role of the Gulf police, so they set out to bring the Shaikh of Bahrain to heel. As soon as Muhammad b. Khalīfa began to harass Hasā shipping once more in 1861, the British squadron moved in, and the Resident, Commander Felix Jones, forced Muhammad and his brother Ali to sign a convention which effectively integrated Bahrain into the Trucial System.¹ Muhammad promised that:²

I agree to abstain from all maritime aggressions of every description, from the prosecution of war, piracy, and slavery by sea, so long as I receive the support of the British Government in the maintenance of the security of my possessions against similar aggressions directed against them by the chiefs and tribes of this Gulf.

The origins of Muhammad b. Khalīfa's entanglement with certain

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 525-6.

2 Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 234-6.

of the tribes on the mainland and the festering of dynastic rivalries have already been alluded to. Following the death of Shaikh Khalīfa b. Salman in 1834, his uncle, Shaikh ^cAbdallah b. Ahmad, did not share the tasks of rule again, but wielded authority alone. He could not, however, keep his sons and kinsmen under control. They took advantage of his weakness to extort crippling levies from the populace and to indulge in violent and disruptive behaviour, which not only hindered commercial traffic, but caused a number of Bahrain's more prosperous inhabitants to emigrate. In 1835 the Āl b. Ali and Āl Bu ^cAinain tribes of Huwaitah actually rebelled against ^cAbdallah's rule, and led by Shaikh ^cIsā b. Tarīf they emigrated completely to Abū Dhabī. The feud thus commenced dragged on unresolved until ^cAbdallah became preoccupied with the Egyptian presence in Hasā, and concluded peace with the Shaikh of Abū Dhabī. Consequently ^cIsā b. Tarīf and his followers crossed over to the island of Qais, off the Persian coast.¹

By 1842 conditions under ^cAbdallah's rule had deteriorated even further. A confederacy was formed by his leading opponents to oust him. It was led by Muhammad b. Khalīfa, his great-nephew, by ^cIsā b. Tarīf and by Bashīr b. Rahmah, son of the notorious freebooter of the Āl Jalāhima, Rahmah b. Jābir. These three received the support of the Wahhābī Amīr, and, as mentioned, the British in the Gulf did not interfere on this occasion as they had no liking for ^cAbdallah themselves. The coup was successful, and ^cAbdallah was forced into exile. He received an initially warm welcome from the Persians, but

¹ Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 361 & 363.

they were not able to give him sufficient practical aid and gradually tired of his disruptive behaviour themselves.

With ^cAbdallah's deposition in 1843 the rule of the Bahrain Shaikhdom reverted to the senior branch of the Āl Khalīfa family, the descendants of Shaikh Salman, in the person of Muhammad b. Khalīfa.¹ However, a shaikh held leadership not just by birth but by merit, as discerned by the leading members of the tribe. The kinsmen of ^cAbdallah, who came to be known as the Āl ^cAbdallah faction, as opposed to the Āl Salman, were not the only subjects of Bahrain to find Muhammad lacking in the qualities of leadership. His rule proved to be as cruel, arbitrary and grasping as that of ^cAbdallah and his unruly sons; and Muhammad's contrastingly far-sighted and charming brother and assistant, Ali, had great difficulty in moderating Muhammad's activities.² Consequently the supporters of the Āl ^cAbdallah faction increased with time, out of all proportion to the numbers warranted by the unpopularity of its founder. Amongst those who quickly tired of Muhammad were his erstwhile supporters ^cIsā b. Tarīf and his followers, the Āl b. Ali and Āl Bu ^cAinain. ^cIsā himself was to die in an attack launched in Qatar in conjunction with ^cAbdallah in 1847.³

Shaikh Muhammad was aware that the first years of his rule as Shaikh had not run smoothly and that the island's prosperity was continuing to decline. After the death of ^cIsā b. Tarīf, his rebel followers at Qais awaited their opportunity for revenge. Meanwhile, Muhammad faced the consequences of the displeasure of the Amīr Faisal

1 See the genealogical table at the end.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 501.

3 Ibid., p. 383.

over disputed territories on the mainland. When in 1849 ^cAbdallah set off for Muscat to muster support from Sayyid Sa^cid for an invasion, Muhammad panicked. In agreement with his leading kinsmen, he approached the British Government to offer them sovereignty of the islands.¹ The Resident, Hennell, surmised that, believing the prosperity of Kuwait and of Bushire to be due to their subjection to the Ottoman Sultan and the Shah respectively, Muhammad deduced that Bahrain's fortunes would recover under British sovereignty.

Although the British Government refused his offers Shaikh Muhammad was released from the worst of his problems by the death of ^cAbdallah in Muscat, and the conclusion of peace with the Amīr Faisal. Even so, the respite lasted only a few years, and Muhammad himself invited trouble. Fretting under Faisal's demands after his agreement of 1851, the Shaikh angered the Amīr by seeking an alternative alliance with Muscat or Egypt.² Faisal had more cooperative vassals in the area in the shape of the Āl b. Ali and Āl Bū ^cAinain tribesmen and Muhammad b. ^cAbdallah, the new leader of the Āl ^cAbdallah line, whom he had settled at Dammām. They readily assisted Faisal in his raid on Bahrain of 1854.³ From this time on Muhammad b. Khalīfa learnt that he could expect hostility and interference whenever the opportunity presented itself from this rebel stronghold and the efforts of mediators, including the British and the Trucial Shaikhs, could not

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 384-5.

2 Ibid., pp. 501-2.

3 Ibid., p. 502.

effect a lasting reconciliation. It was in desperation at this seemingly intractable problem that the British authorities had decided to organise the evacuation of the Dammām settlers just when Muhammad b. Khalīfa altered their priorities with his friendly invitations to the Turks and the Persians in 1859-60.

After he was corned into signing the Convention of 1861, Shaikh Muhammad was bound to keep the peace; yet he was still harassed by the rebels of Dammām. Quarrels and disruptions continued, with the Resident making vain attempts to discipline his charge. The watershed came in October 1867 when Muhammad b. Khalīfa and Shaikh Zaid of Abū Dhabī combined in a devastating assault on the Qatar coast, razing Bida^c and Wakra and forcing their inhabitants to flee.¹

The Resident, Colonel Lewis Pelly, recognised that this blatant outrage must be swiftly and drastically punished, or else respect for British authority amongst the Gulf shaikhs would be compromised, thus undermining the basis of the entire system of maritime peace. Initially, however, his hands were tied by the absence of a British naval force to effect retribution. Now Pelly was uncomfortably aware of the Arab tribal shaikhs watching and waiting to see if the British could or would rise to the challenge. The Resident formally charged Shaikh Zaid with violating the Maritime Truce, and Shaikh

¹ Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 673.

Muhammad with violating the 1861 Convention, and demanded an explanation. His demands met with procrastination and defiance. As the Qatar coastal tribes waited in vain for the British to force reparation, they took it upon themselves to attack the Bahrain fleet in June 1868.¹ The ensuing bloodshed and disorder further emphasised British loss of control over peace in the Gulf.

In early September 1868, Pelly at last received the naval forces he needed. The squadron sailed at once for Bahrain. Muhammad b. Khalifa had left Bahrain for Khor Hassan in Qatar rather than face Pelly, leaving his brother Ali to handle the situation. When the Resident had departed Muhammad could return to take up his former position, having avoided punishment. It was thus with Shaikh Ali that Colonel Pelly made contact on his arrival at Bahrain. He did not, however, play into Muhammad's hands. Prior to his arrival he had received intelligence of Muhammad's intentions to evade punishment, and he had also received information that Shaikh Muhammad was much disliked for his tyrannical rule, not only by the foreign merchants trading in Manāma, but by many of the Arab populace of the islands.² Consequently, Pelly took the opportunity offered by Muhammad's absence, and rendered full recognition

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 674.

2 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, no. 111, 25 September 1868, para. 7; and Appendix B2, Pelly to Muhammad b. Khalifa and, in his absence Ali b. Khalifa, 2 September 1868, L/P&S/5/261.

to his brother Ali as Bahrain's sole ruler; Muhammad having forfeited his title by his repeated violations of the peace, and his flight from Bahrain. On 6th September Ali, together with seven shaikhs and subjects of Bahrain, accepted the stipulations of a new convention with the British, promising to hand over Muhammad to the Resident should he ever return, and to pay a fine for damages to the Government of Bombay.¹ Pelly then burnt Muhammad's war fleet and shelled his fortress residence.²

The Resident went next to Qatar, to try and arrange an end to the feud with Bahrain. The leading shaikh of Qatar, Muhammad b. Thānī, agreed on 12th September by a formal convention not to commit any more hostilities at sea and to recognise Shaikh Ali and maintain towards him "all the relations which heretofore subsisted between" Muhammad b. Thānī and the ruler of Bahrain.³ Furthermore, he agreed to surrender Muhammad b. Khalīfa to the British should he fall into his hands, and to refer any future disputes for the mediation of the Resident. On 13th September Pelly obtained another engagement from the remaining shaikhs of Qatar.⁴ The annual tribute from Qatar to Bahrain, over which the Shaikh of Bida^c and Muhammad b. Khalīfa had disagreed, was fixed at 9000 krans; part to be paid to the new ruler

1 For the terms of the Declaration of 6th September 1868 see Ibid., Appendix 3. These signatures and seals of Ali and the other seven do not appear either in this source or in Aitchison, pp. 236-7.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 674-5.

3 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, no. 111, 25 September 1868, Appendix 6, L/P&S/5/261.

4 Ibid., Appendix 7B.

of Bahrain and ultimately to the Wahhābī Amīr of Najd, and part direct to the Na^Cīm tribe of Qatar. On this occasion the British Resident was unequivocal about the significance of the payment:¹

It is understood that this payment of Tribute does not affect the independence of Guttur in relation to Bahrein. But it is to be considered as a fixed contribution by Guttur towards a total sum payable by Bahrein and Guttur combined, in view to securing their Frontiers from molestation by the Naim and Wahabee Bedouins, more particularly during the pearl diving season, when the tribes of Guttur and Bahrein, occupied at sea, leave their homesteads comparatively unprotected.

Shaikh Zaid of Abū Dhabī proved initially less cooperative, but two days' argument and a threat of bombardment of his port eventually brought his agreement to keep the peace, release the prisoners he had taken in Qatar, and pay compensation.²

As was to be expected, the Persian Government reacted unfavourably to Pelly's handling of Bahrain's affairs. The Persian Foreign Minister complained to the British Minister in Tehran that, as the recognised sovereign of Bahrain, his Government should have been given prior notice of Pelly's actions, and he expressed a fear that no Persian island in the Gulf could now be considered safe from his interference.³ Pelly poured scorn on Persia's assertions; he received support at the India Office.⁴

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 675. For the terms of this agreement see: Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, no. 111, 25 September 1868; Appendix 6, L/P&S/5/261. It is significant that the agreement did not bind the heirs of Muḥammad b. Thānī, nor did it incorporate Qatar into the Trucial System.

2 For the terms of this agreement see: Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, no. 111, 25 September 1868, Appendix 10, L/P&S/5/261.

3 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 676.

4 Ibid., pp. 676-7.

To the Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, however, larger considerations were involved. He was concerned with the requirements of British diplomacy in the context of Asia as a whole, over and above the interests of British India. He sought to promote Anglo-Persian friendship as a counter-balance to Russia's ambitions in the area, and to this end he was prepared to humour Persia on the subject of Bahrain. It distressed him to find his policy interfered with through the independent actions of the Government of India on the Arab side of the Gulf.¹

Clarendon received a second Persian complaint about Pelly's behaviour, this time from the Persian chargé d'affaires in London, General Hajji Mohsin Khan. Unclear as to either the details or the exact reasoning behind the Resident's actions, Clarendon referred to the India Office for information. He was sent all the correspondence which had come through from India on the matter, and on the basis of this, in January 1869, Clarendon instructed the British Minister in Tehran to give the Persian Government a full explanation of Pelly's actions. He also asked the India Office if it might not, in future, be possible to give the Persians forewarning of their intentions.²

The Persian chargé d'affaires pestered Clarendon with further protestations, threatening to turn the incident into a major breach of friendly relations. The response of the India Office was firm.

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 677.

2 Ibid., p. 678.

The validity of Persia's claim to Bahrain was emphatically refuted. The advice of the India Office was simply to inform the Persians that the British regarded Bahrain as independent and would continue to do so. Mohsin Khan was not, however, satisfied with this interpretation, and to substantiate his arguments produced the letters written to Persia by Muhammad b. Khalifa in April 1860, at the time, incidentally, when he was also courting the Porte.¹

The India Office was unshaken, and reiterated the vital Indian interest which underlay its firmness on the issue. The Secretary of State for India, the Duke of Argyll, again dismissed the Persian arguments, and informed Clarendon, in addition, that even if the Persian claim were accepted:²

To substitute the distant and ineffective authority of Persia for the direct responsibility of the local Chief to the power which controls the maritime police of the Gulf would be fatal to the policy which has so long and advantageously been maintained in that part of the world.

None the less Argyll was sensitive to Clarendon's desire to smooth over the breach between Persia and Britain. Against the judgment of the majority of his colleagues at the India Office he came up with the proposal that, "as a matter of courtesy to the Persian Government", he should instruct the Resident to make known his actions in respect of Bahrain, in advance, to the British Minister in Tehran. He, in turn, could inform the Persian Government of events, though in cases of emergency, the Resident might have to act so quickly that prior notice would be impossible.³

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 678-9.

2 Quoted Ibid., p. 679.

3 Ibid., p. 679.

Clarendon sent a communiqué to Mohsin Khan which incorporated Argyll's proposal, and side-stepped the question of sovereignty by asserting that Britain's only reason for disciplining the Shaikh of Bahrain in accordance with their joint engagements was to preserve the general peace of the Gulf. On this note he even suggested that if the Persian Government were ready to take over the policing of the Gulf, the British could relinquish an irksome and expensive burden.¹ Meanwhile, however, he believed that their interest in the preservation of Gulf peace was mutual and had to be provided for.

Mohsin Khan again expressed dissatisfaction. He apparently sought to manoeuvre the British into conceding, even if in veiled terms, Persian rights in respect of Bahrain's sovereignty. He suggested certain alterations to the official communiqué, including a statement that, until such time as the Shah possessed sufficient maritime forces to take over the policing of the Gulf, the British would not take action over Bahrain, without prior reference to the Shah. To this loaded statement Clarendon was shrewd enough not to agree, having consulted Argyll on its implications.² Yet he did allow a new introductory sentence which went some way towards meeting Mohsin Khan's suggestions:³

The British Government readily admit that the Government of the Shah has protested against the Persian right of sovereignty over Bahrein being ignored by the British authorities, and they have given due consideration to that protest.

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 680.

2 Kelly, 'The Persian Claim to Bahrain', loc. cit., p. 69.

3 Quoted in Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 681.

Clarendon also conceded that, when the Resident felt obliged to act speedily, without prior recourse to the Persian Government, the Shah would receive a full explanation of his actions subsequently.

At no point did the British communiqué give recognition to Persia's claims to sovereignty over Bahrain. Yet the draft was both sufficiently deferential for Mohsin Khan to accept it, and for the India Office as a whole to regard it with misgivings. Not surprisingly the Persian Government were to construct upon this document assertions that Britain had effectively conceded sovereignty to Persia. Whilst the British were able on such occasions, which arose repeatedly after 1869, to refute this, they were made to regret that they had ever drawn up such a courteous, diplomatic letter.¹

A few months after these diplomatic exchanges in London events took an unexpected and decisive turn in Bahrain itself. Following his flight from the shaikhdom, Muhammad b. Khalīfa had settled at Qatīf, with the sanction of his erstwhile enemy, Amīr ^cAbdallah b. Faisal. Whether the Wahhābī Amīr was prepared actively to support the cause of the deposed shaikh is unclear, but he was not likely to have looked favourably upon the intervention of Colonel Pelly in Bahrain's internal affairs.² Certainly he did not interfere when Muhammad b. Khalīfa rallied a force, partly from his kinsmen the

1 Kelly, 'The Persian Claim to Bahrain', loc. cit., pp. 65-70. The status of Bahrain was not to be defined clearly by Britain until the implementation of the Order in Council for Bahrain in 1919, and Persia did not finally abandon its claim until 1971.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 682. See also Way to Pelly, 23 September 1869, L/P&S/5/263, pp. 1484-88.

Al ^ᶜAbdallah under the leadership of Nāsir b. Mubārak, and partly from amongst the Banī Hājir bedouin, with whom Nāsir was connected by marriage and through his mother. This was the nucleus of the force, joined by various other disaffected tribesmen of Qatar, with which Muhammad b. Khalīfa launched a surprise attack on Bahrain in September 1869. Ali was caught unawares and hastily mustered support, largely from amongst other bedouin of the same Banī Hājir tribe. He also sent for Muhammad b. ^ᶜAbdallah, the erstwhile exile, who had been permitted to resettle on the island, but whose commitment to Ali was by no means assured. He answered the summons and was duly sent by Ali to treat with his brother and learn his terms. However, Muhammad b. ^ᶜAbdallah merely transferred his allegiance to the invaders and encouraged their advance. The rival forces met in battle, the Banī Hājir all united under Nāsir b. Mubārak, and both Shaikh Ali and his son Ibrāhīm were killed.¹

The satisfaction of Muhammad b. Khalīfa at the success of his invasion was shortlived. Muhammad b. ^ᶜAbdallah declared himself the new ruler and threw Muhammad b. Khalīfa into prison. Meanwhile the Banī Hājir ran riot, ransacking the town of Manāma and terrorising its inhabitants. Some distance out from the harbour, Captain A.C. Way, the Assistant Political Resident, observed events from the steamer "Dalhousie".² He gained the impression that the Arabs of Muharraḡ refrained from intervening to halt the sacking of Manāma and, indeed, the invasion in the first place, because of their

1 Way to Pelly, 23 September 1869, L/P&S/5/263, pp. 1484-88.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 682-3.

uncertainty as to whether the Wahhābī Amīr had given the venture his blessing and would intervene on the invaders' behalf. Some of these Arabs declared a willingness to take action if the British would guarantee them support.

Colonel Pelly reacted by submitting to the Government of Bombay a plan to blockade the islands, take all the rebel leaders into custody, and forcibly to install, as sole ruler, the eldest son of the late Shaikh Ali, ^cIsā, who had acted as Ali's governor in Qatar.¹ The island property of all the other shaikhs should be distributed amongst the victims of the destruction of Manāma, and the mainland tribal supporters of the revolt, notably the Banī Hājir, should be pressured by a blockade of the Hasā coast, until all plundered property was restored. The Government of India allowed Pelly to proceed, except that he was forbidden to confiscate property on the island or to blockade the coast, as the first would render the position of the new shaikh less tenable, and the second could not be carried on without a greater number of naval vessels than were available.²

Pelly arrived at Bahrain in November, three months after the invasion and the seizure of power by Shaikh Muhammad b. ^cAbdallah. After a short blockade, Muhammad b. ^cAbdallah and Muhammad b. Khalīfa surrendered, though Nāsir b. Mubārak managed to escape to Hasā.

1 Way to Pelly, 23 September 1869, L/P&S/5/263, pp. 1484-88. This letter explains that ^cIsā had been allowed to return to Qatar after the invasion, and there enjoyed the support of the Na^cim tribe, in opposition to Shaikh Muhammad b. ^cAbdallah, and Muhammad b. Khalīfa.

2 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 682.

Pelly then summoned ^CIsā and recognised him as the new Shaikh of Bahrain. Furthermore, despite his instructions, Pelly made the proviso that ^CIsā agree to confiscate the property of the prisoners and redistribute it as compensation to the citizens and merchants of Manāma. Then, when an emissary of Persia arrived, expecting to deliver Persia's recognition of Shaikh Muhammad b. ^CAbdallah, he was permitted to deliver his despatches to Muhammad, only for them to be confiscated by Pelly immediately afterwards and sent for the attention of the Government of India.¹

The diplomatic repercussions of Pelly's reorganisation of Bahrain's internal affairs were not long in coming. In January 1870 the Ottoman Ambassador in London made a formal complaint to the Foreign Office, alleging that "L'Ile de Bahrein n'ayant jamais cessé, que nous sachions, de faire partie des Possessions Ottomanes".² The Foreign Office rejected the protest, basing its decision upon that of Lord Palmerston in 1851.³

Not surprisingly, in January and March 1870 Mohsin Khan duly filed his official Persian protests. Not only had Pelly taken a decisive stand in Bahrain affairs without previously informing the Persian Government of his intentions, but his treatment of the Persian emissary to the island had been offensive. Clarendon was

1 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 683.

2 E. Hertslet, 'Memorandum on the Separate Claims of Turkey and Persia to Sovereignty over the Island of Bahrein', F.O., 23 March 1874, L/P&S/18/B9, p. 20.

3 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 683.

exasperated, especially with Pelly himself, whose behaviour he regarded as "of a very high-handed character". By now, however, the India Office firmly held a different view of these events. The Government of India had learnt both of Persia's intention to recognise the assumption of power by the rebel Muhammad b. ^cAbdallah, and of Clarendon's misconstrued statement that the Shah might one day prefer to relieve the British of their police duties. Both attitudes appeared in India as unwarranted disregard for the requirements of peace and stability in the Gulf. The Viceroy fully supported Pelly's actions and the general policy on which they were based, a view endorsed by Argyll at the India Office, with regard to both the independent status of Bahrain, and the whole substance of the Persian complaint.¹

So far as the Government of India was concerned the matter was closed. The prisoner shaikhs were taken into their custody and never returned to Bahrain. The installation of Shaikh ^cĪsā in the archipelago by Colonel Pelly meanwhile heralded the beginning of a new era in Anglo-Bahraini relations.

The British became doubly responsible for the protection of the new ruler. Since 1861 the British Government had been under an obligation to uphold the ruler's independence, but after 1869 they guaranteed his position. Shaikh ^cĪsā ruled for a long period and the forcible expulsion of his rivals did not resolve the

¹ Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 683-5.

inter-dynastic feud; it merely transformed the terms of the conflict. The British maritime policy decreed that British power would oppose those who had fled the islands if they tried to fight their way back in. But it could not prevent their trying. The challenge to the new ruler of Bahrain would be a major issue in Gulf affairs for the next quarter of a century.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHALLENGE TO SHAIKH ʿĪSĀ, 1869-95: PART I, 1869-81

The way in which Shaikh ʿĪsā b. Ali Āl Khalīfa had come to power in Bahrain in November 1869 made it likely that his rule in the Shaikhdom would be faced with external challenges. Shaikh ʿĪsā had been placed in power by the Resident at Bushire after a British naval squadron had intervened to end a bloody period of civil war between rival branches of the ruling family. A number of the leading members of the defeated branch, the Āl ʿAbdallāh, had been imprisoned by the British. On the other hand, other leading Āl ʿAbdallāh had, in November 1869, escaped from Bahrain to the Hasā mainland. The most important of these being the cousin of Shaikh ʿĪsā, Nāsir b. Mubārak. These exiles repeatedly threatened the rule of Shaikh ʿĪsā for more than two and a half decades after their flight from Bahrain.

The sense of grievance of the exiled Āl ʿAbdallāh had been made worse by the fact that the placing of Shaikh ʿĪsā in power in Bahrain had been brought about in defiance of the Arab tradition of the right of conquest. They were always careful to make this point whenever the opportunity arose.¹

The most important source of the resentment of the Āl ʿAbdallāh, however, was one condition that Pelly, contrary to Government orders,

¹ See for example report of Agha Muhammad Rahīm, Residency Agent, Bahrain, on his secret meeting with Nāsir b. Mubārak in Qatar, no date, but some time in March 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 935.

had laid down at the time of the installation of Shaikh [°]Isā as ruler of Bahrain; the confiscation of the property of the Āl [°]Abdallah. By doing this it became possible to compensate those who had suffered losses as a result of the disturbances of 1868-69, for which the British blamed the Āl [°]Abdallah. In this way Shaikh [°]Isā made certain of the irreconcilable hostility of the Āl [°]Abdallah.¹

The Āl [°]Abdallah did have certain resources on which they could call in order to cause trouble for Shaikh [°]Isā. In the first place, the Banī Hājir tribe who migrated every year between their lands in Qatar and Basra, provided manpower for a number of attempts to overthrow Shaikh [°]Isā.² The Banī Hājir were connected with the Āl [°]Abdallah through Nāsir b. Mubārak, who was the son of a woman of the tribe and had also married a Banī Hājir woman.³

In 1871 a major new development complicated the politics of the Gulf, from which the Āl [°]Abdallah gained another source of support. In that year, taking the opportunity to intervene in the dispute between the rival factions of the Āl Sa[°]ūd in Najd, a Turkish expeditionary force occupied the Hasā coast to the west of Bahrain, and the whole Arab littoral of the Gulf was claimed for the Ottoman Empire.⁴ The

1 See comment of E.C. Ross, Resident, Bushire, to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D. Foreign Department, 4 March 1881, L/P & S/7/28, pp. 939-40.

2 See for example S.B. Miles, Officiating Resident, Bushire, to Political Resident, Baghdad, 15 October 1886, L/P & S/7/48, p. 1083.

3 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Bushire, 20 July 1881, No. 99, L/P & S/9/66A, pp. 491A-92. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 759.

4 See the proclamation of 20 April 1871 by the commander of the Turkish expedition to the people of Hasā, L/P & S/9/18, pp. 67-68. A detailed account of this Turkish expedition is given in 'Nejd Expedition Precis' by 'P.D.H.' 6 March 1882, L/P & S/18/B99. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 717-51.

organiser of the expedition was Midhat Pasha, the vigorous new Wālī of Baghdad.¹ The Turkish advance and the rumours surrounding it aroused British concern about Turkish intentions toward all the Trucial Shaikhdoms, and particularly toward Bahrain, because of its proximity to the scene of operations. The British Consul-General in Baghdad strongly suspected that Midhat wished to make use of the expedition to promote the Turkish claims to Bahrain.² In spite of the Porte's denials that maritime operations against Bahrain were not contemplated³, Pelly for one was not convinced that such an attempt might not be made.⁴

British apprehensions that Midhat intended such an attempt were increased in July 1871 when the wālī referred to Bahrain as "one of the dependencies of Najd".⁵ Since the avowed object of the expedition was to uphold what the Ottomans claimed to be their sovereignty over Najd, Midhat's statement suggested a potential threat to Bahrain. In fact it was not impossible to make out a case that Bahrain had in the past been in some way a 'dependency of Najd'. The Shaikhs of Bahrain had, albeit irregularly, paid zakāt to the Wahhābī rulers in Riyadh, on account of certain lands the Āl Khalīfa

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- 1 For a biographical sketch of Midhat, especially during his time at Baghdad, see Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, Four Centuries of Modern Iraq (Beirut, 1925), pp. 298-301.
 - 2 Herbert, Consul-General, Baghdad, to Sir Henry Elliot, British Ambassador, Constantinople, 24 March 1871, L/P & S/3/78, p. 522. The Turks had periodically pressed claims to sovereignty over Bahrain ever since 1847: E. Hertslet, 'Separate Claims Memorandum', p. 8. See also Lorimer, IB, p. 881; and Chapter I, p. 52, above.
 - 3 Elliot to Foreign Office, 3 April 1871, No. 142, L/P & S/3/78, p. 422.
 - 4 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept., 6 May 1871, L/P & S/9/17, p. 716.
 - 5 Midhat to Herbert, 18 July 1871, No. 85, L/P & S/5/268, p. 418. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 731.

had held in Qatar. As far as this territory was concerned, the Government of India had, in 1867, conceded that the Shaikh of Bahrain owed fealty to the Wahhābī Government.¹

The military success of Midhat's expedition, at least in its early stages, was a threat to the prestige on which British supremacy in the Gulf partly depended. In the course of 1871, reports reached Bushire that Arab opinion in the Gulf had concluded that the Turks were strong and that they intended "to take possession of the whole Gulf".² Further, it was reported that for several weeks a leading figure of a tribe of the Basra area, had been residing with Shaikh ʿĪsā and making speeches of a disturbing kind. Outside Shaikh ʿĪsā's house this man had been asking everyone "why the English are constantly here, does the Island belong to them or is Sheikh Esau paying the English to look after Bahrain". At daily congregations at Shaikh ʿĪsā's house the tribal leader had also turned "the conversations on the doings of the Turks, that they must be all powerful, that it would be best to make terms with them and such little sayings".³

There was much justification for British apprehensions about the intentions of Midhat Pasha towards Bahrain. In December 1871 Pelly discovered that the wālī had been scheming to get up a petition from leading Bahraini merchants asking for the establishment of Turkish rule

1 Sec. to Govt. of India to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, 22 March 1867, No. 274, R/15/2/29, p. 12.

2 William Guthrie, Commanding H.M.S. Hugh Rose, to Pelly, 26 September 1871, L/P & S/9/19, p. 99.

3 Ibid., pp. 101-02.

over the Shaikhdom.¹ Midhat had, indeed, made an attempt at this time to land in Bahrain but had been prevented by the presence of British gunboats in the straits between Bahrain and Hasā.² Even Midhat's adversary, the Amīr Sa^cūd ibn Faisal, sought to involve the coastal tribes in his struggle in ways which would disturb the delicate balance of the British system of maintaining the maritime peace. Sa^cūd asked Pelly for permission to allow ^cIsā and the other Trucial shaikhs to fight the Turks at sea on his behalf, but this understandably came to nothing.³

In July 1871 the Assistant Political Resident reported that along the Qatar coast the idea was "more or less prevalent that we are not to, or cannot, interfere with the Turkish Flag".⁴ Among those who calculated that the introduction of Turkish power on the mainland so close to Bahrain might prove to be to their advantage were the Āl ^cAbdallah exiles. As Pelly noted at the time, Nāsir b. Mubārak for one would "gladly avail" himself of "any flag or pretext which might appear to promise him a chance for an attack ... on Bahrain".⁵ Nor were the Turks slow to try to make use of the Āl ^cAbdallah to further their own interests. Very soon after the

1 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept., 29 December 1871, L/P & S/9/19, p. 493.

2 Ibid., pp. 491-96.

3 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, 15 June 1871, L/P & S/9/17, p. 1001. For the debate on the implications of the Turkish expedition for the naval basis of the Trucial system, see Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 721 ff.

4 Smith to Pelly, 20 July 1871, L/P & S/9/18, p. 381.

5 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept., 31 July 1871, L/P & S/9/18, p. 377.

Turks had entered Hasā in 1871, Nāsir b. Mubārak had been recruited by them as an agent through whom contact could be made with important Arabs in the area. Later, the British discovered that Nāsir was in receipt of a monthly pension of sixty Maria-Theresa dollars from the Ottoman treasury.¹

The threat to Shaikh Īsā's rule in Bahrain in the period 1869-95 involved a third element, Shaikh Qāsim² b. Muhammad Āl Thānī of Bida^c. While the Āl Thānī of Bida^c were the most powerful shaikhs in Qatar, the Āl Khalīfa rulers of Bahrain had a long-standing claim to sovereignty in the peninsula. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, the Shaikhs of Bahrain liked to point out that "all the dependencies of Katr" had "previously belonged to Bahrain".³ These pretensions of the Āl Khalīfa to sovereignty in Qatar had been recognised by the father of Shaikh Qāsim, Shaikh Muhammad b. Thānī. During his period of rule over Bida^c since 1854, he had regularly paid a tribute to the Āl Khalīfa, an arrangement confirmed by Pelly in 1868.⁴

The British too, had generally found Shaikh Muhammad to be willing to take a favourable attitude to their demands. The 1868 agreement between Pelly and Shaikh Muhammad b. Thānī, as a result of the disturbances involving Bahrain and Qatar in that year, brought the

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 April 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 931. A Maria-Theresa dollar was a silver coin worth nearly one and a half rupees.

2 In the records the Shaikh is often referred to as 'Jāsim', because of the peculiar pronunciation of the Arabic language by the Qataris (and others on the Arab coast). The classical spelling 'Qāsim' will be used in this work throughout.

3 Shaikh of Bahrain to Ross, 24 February 1884, L/P & S/7/36, p. 404.

4 See Chapter I, pp. 61.

Shaikh of Bida^c into a relationship with Britain very similar to that created in 1853 with the Trucial rulers.¹ Indeed, in August 1869, Shaikh Muhammad had attempted to claim that he was "now a subject of the British Government" and that his duty was "to obey that Government".² The British were not at that time prepared to assume such a responsibility for Qatar, and Pelly replied that Shaikh Muhammad was not a British subject "but an Arab Chieftain in friendly communications with Her Majesty's Indian Government".³

The British were to discover, however, that Shaikh Muhammad's son and successor, Shaikh Q̄asim, who by the end of the 1860s was already prominent in Qatari affairs, was by no means as pliable as his father, nor as favourably disposed to the Āl Khalīfa or their British protectors. During the disturbances of 1868, Shaikh Q̄asim had been sent to Bahrain as a peace emissary representing Qatar. For his pains he had been temporarily imprisoned by the Āl Khalīfa rulers of the island.⁴ Possibly this was one reason for the hostility to the Āl Khalīfa which Q̄asim was later to show. At the same time, it seems probable that Shaikh Q̄asim, who was more ambitious than his father, was not as prepared as Shaikh Muhammad to submit to the claims of the Āl Khalīfa to sovereignty over Qatar.

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- 1 Aitchison in fact classified the 1868 agreement with Shaikh Muhammad under 'Treaties relating to the Trucial Arab Shaikhs of Oman'.
 - 2 'Translated purport of a letter from Mahomed-bin-Sani, 5 August 1869 to the Political Resident', L/P & S/5/263, p. 1151.
 - 3 Pelly to Shaikh Muhammad b. Thānī, 5 August 1869, L/P & S/5/263, p. 1151.
 - 4 Al-Nabhānī, op. cit., p. 183.

After the flight of the Āl ʿAbdallāh in 1869, Nāsir b. Mubārak and Shaikh Qāsīm were quick to appreciate the common interest they shared in challenging the rule of Shaikh ʿIsā in Bahrain, and an alliance was formed.¹ Later, in 1880, Nāsir married one of Shaikh Qāsīm's daughters.² Even in 1871, however, the relationship was close and, when Nāsir b. Mubārak threw in his lot with the Turks, Shaikh Qāsīm was quick to follow his example.

By the time of the Turkish invasion of Ḥasā, Shaikh Muḥammad b. Thānī was old and infirm³, and Shaikh Qāsīm's influence at Bidaʿ was now dominant. Major Smith, the Assistant Resident, discovered on a visit to Bidaʿ that Shaikh Qāsīm was flying the Turkish flag over his house. Shaikh Muḥammad, apparently not enthusiastic about his son's acceptance of Turkish sovereignty at Bidaʿ, continued to fly the "Arab flag".⁴ It would appear that Shaikh Qāsīm had dared to accept the Turkish flag because, whilst the British were unchallengable at sea, on land it was a different matter. Shaikh Qāsīm stated to Smith that "'We are people on the mainland and that their (Turks) Forces are moving by land'".⁵ Pelly noted that Shaikh Muḥammad, though "well-disposed and peaceful", knew that the British concerned

1 Sidney Smith to Pelly, 20 July 1871, L/P & S/9/18, p. 381.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 26 February 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 928.

3 He died in 1878. See register Z/P/1373 part B; also Lorimer, IA, 804.

4 Smith to Pelly, 20 July 1871, L/P & S/9/18 p. 381. Smith did not make it clear what precisely this "Arab flag" consisted of. Most likely it was the Al Thānī family flag.

5 Ibid.

themselves only with the maritime peace. If he showed resistance to flying of the Turkish flag at Bida^c he would probably be coerced by the Ottoman forces.¹

The British relationship with Bahrain was first tested by the Turks over an affair in 1871 in which a Turkish messenger was murdered in the Shaikhdom.² A Banī Hājir tribesman was employed by Nāsir b. Mubārak to take letters to Shaikh Qāsim. Imprudently, the messenger made use of a boat which put into a small port on the coast of Bahrain. Whilst the vessel was at anchor, it came to the knowledge of certain relatives of the late ruler of Bahrain, Ali b. Khalīfa, that the messenger had participated in the killing of that Shaikh in 1869. In accordance with contemporary local customs relating to vengeance, the relatives of Shaikh Ali seized and killed the messenger.³ On his body were found letters addressed to Shaikh Qāsim by Nāsir b. Mubārak and others of the Āl ^cAbdallah as well as other letters from Ferek Pasha, the Turkish commandant in Hasā. One of the letters, written by a son of Nāsir b. Mubārak, contained the passage:

The news is such as you would wish, and the Exalted Government are trying for Bahrain, Guttur, and other places to the detriment of the enemy and the rejoicing of friends. In shallah [God willing] you will shortly receive news which will gladden you.⁴

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- 1 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept., 31 July 1871, L/P & S/9/18, p. 377.
 - 2 This affair is discussed in detail in Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 732 ff.
 - 3 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept., 12 September 1871, L/P & S/9/18, pp. 751-52.
 - 4 Quoted in Shaikh ^cIsā to Midhat Pasha, 25 November 1871, L/P & S/9/19, pp. 435-38.

The letter of the Turkish commandant was apparently passed on to Shaikh Q̄asim unopened. Even so, when news of the incident reached Midhat Pasha in Baghdad, he informed Herbert that he intended to visit Bahrain to obtain reparation for the murder. Herbert was suspicious about the reasons why Midhat had decided on this course of action rather than applying to Pelly for redress. The Baghdad Consul considered that Midhat did not wish to admit that the British Resident in the Gulf might represent the interests of Bahrain as far as other powers were concerned.¹

Midhat's threat to go to Bahrain to deal with the Shaikh directly was certainly a defiance of the connection with Bahrain which the British Government had built up through successive agreements, and entailed a high risk of armed conflict between the Turks and the British. Pelly was ordered by the Government of India to proceed to Bahrain and the Government of Bombay suggested that he should, by means of the two warships at his disposal, prevent a Turkish occupation of the Shaikhdom.² If the forces at Pelly's disposal were inadequate for the task, he should offer his good offices so that a peaceful settlement could be arranged.³ The Government of India and the India Office wanted Pelly to try and induce Midhat to refer the question of reparation to Constantinople

1 Herbert to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 15 and 24 October 1871 (tels.), L/P & S/5/268, pp. 389-90. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 733.

2 Govt. of Bombay to Govt. of India, 5 November 1871 (tel.), L/P & S/5/268, p. 600. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 734.

3 Ibid.

for settlement through diplomatic exchanges with London.¹ No matter how a solution was to be reached, the British objective was to interpose themselves between Midhat and Shaikh ^ḤIsā and thereby assert their right to protect Bahrain.

Before instructions could reach Pelly he had, on 11 November 1871, arrived in Bahrain.² On 22 November, a Turkish Commodore, ^ḤArif Bey, arrived in the harbour at Manāma with two gunboats to demand reparation for the killing of the messenger. ^ḤArif also stated that Midhat Pasha himself intended to come to Bahrain because of the incident.³

At first Pelly decided to try and manage the situation indirectly through Shaikh ^ḤIsā. This, of course, was in conformity with the relationship between the British Government and the ruler of Bahrain as defined in the convention of 1861. By this convention the British, whilst taking a responsibility for the protection of Bahrain from maritime aggressions, recognised the Shaikh as an "independent ruler".⁴ As such, he was clearly entitled to deal with the approaches of foreign powers directly. Nothing in the agreements which the rulers of Baghdad had reached with the British Government prohibited, or even limited, such direct communication. Thus Shaikh ^ḤIsā, under the advice of Pelly, answered the representatives of

1 Govt. of India to India Office, 8 November 1871, tel. No. 17 C.P., L/P & S/5/268, p. 601; Govt. of India to Govt. of Bombay, 8 November 1871, tel. No. 18 C.P., ibid.; Sec. of State to Viceroy, 20 November 1871, ibid., p. 602.

2 For Kelly's account of this incident, see Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 735.

3 Shaikh ^ḤIsā to Midhat Pasha, 25 November 1871, L/P & S/9/19, p. 435.

4 Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 235.

^cArif Bey with a letter to Midhat Pasha, which was conciliatory, but which at the same time regretted that a messenger, claimed by the Turks themselves to have been sent by them to Qatar, should have been found to be the bearer of a letter intimating the desire of the Ottoman Government to seize Bahrain.¹ On 4 December 1871 Midhat, who was now on the Hasā coast, wrote back not only demanding that Shaikh ^cIsā should pay blood-money to Shaikh Qasim, but also hinting that he was empowered to use force should this demand be rejected.² In the event Midhat's threats came to nothing. On 16 December he left Hasā for Basra. Even so, the affair of the murdered Turkish messenger had shown the complications which could arise for the British from insistence by foreign powers on their right to have direct contact with the Shaikh of Bahrain. Because of these complications, the British authorities in London and India considered ways of preventing such direct contact. One possible method would have been to induce Shaikh ^cIsā to agree that any direct communications from foreign powers which he might receive should be passed on to the Resident to be dealt with. This was, in fact, a feature of later agreements between Shaikh ^cIsā and the British Government.³ As a result of the messenger incident, Colonel Pelly took a step towards anticipating these later agreements. The Government of India instructed him to inform the Turks that the murder case could be settled satisfactorily only by diplomacy and, if necessary, by

1 Shaikh ^cIsā to Midhat Pasha, 25 November 1871, L/P & S/9/19, pp. 435-38.

2 Midhat Pasha to Shaikh ^cIsā, 4 December 1871, L/P & S/9/20, p. 121.

3 See below, pp. 122 & 151.

arbitration.¹ At the end of January 1872, the Resident advised Shaikh ^cIsā to reply to Midhat Pasha suggesting that the matter should be arranged between the British and Turkish Governments, by whose joint decision he would abide.²

Direct negotiation between the Turks and Shaikh ^cIsā presented the former with opportunities for bringing pressure to bear on the Shaikhdom to an extent incompatible with British interests. The Porte, however, was not prepared to deal with Shaikh ^cIsā through the British Government but stated its preference that the affair should be settled between agents of Turkey and Bahrain.³ In fact, since Turkish pressure over the messenger affair had by now relaxed, both the Government of India and the British Government were prepared to agree to the Turkish proposal, though on condition that there should be no resort to force or the threat of force.⁴

It should be noted here that there was another probable reason why Pelly's superiors were prepared to accede to Turkish wishes over the settlement of the messenger affair. It is known that, at this time, both the Home Government and the Government of India were concerned that deteriorating relations between Britain and Turkey

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Pelly, 30 November 1871 (tel.), L/P & S/9/19, p. 517.

2 Pelly to Govt. of Bombay, 27 January 1872, quoted in J.A. Saldanha, 'Precis of Turkish Expansion on the Arab Littoral of the Persian Gulf, and Hasa and Katif Affairs', L/P & S/20/C238, p. 40.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

were tending to encourage the latter to cultivate better relations with Russia.¹ C.U. Aitchison, the Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Government of India, noted the main new reason: "the opening of the Suez Canal has made it ten times more our interest to be on good and intimate terms with Turkey than it ever was before".² In the event, no further steps were taken by the Turks over the messenger issue.

Turkish connections continued to raise the question of British control over Shaikh ^ḤIsā's correspondence with foreign powers. In February 1873 Captain Charles Grant, the Assistant Resident in the Gulf, reported from Bahrain that Ahmad b. Nāsir b. ^ḤAbdallah, one of the exiled ^ḤAl ^ḤAbdallah in Qatīf, was trying to obtain papers making him a Turkish subject. If he succeeded he intended to go to Bahrain to try and recover the ^ḤAl ^ḤAbdallah estates to which he was the heir. Grant reported that it was the general impression in the Shaikhdom that the Turkish Government would try "to establish a right to interfere in the affairs of Bahrein" by supporting the claims of the ^ḤAl ^ḤAbdallah.³

In reply the Acting Resident at Bushire told Grant that there seemed no immediate cause for apprehension. If Ahmad should in fact

1 Note by Aitchison on Najd Expedition, July 1872, 'Precis on Muscat Affairs, 1869-92', L/P & S/20/C229, folio Nos. 36 and 36a.

2 Ibid.

3 Charles Grant, Remarks on News-gleanings from Bahrain from 14 to 28 February 1873, P/769, July 1873, No. 102, p. 71.

arrive in Bahrain as a Turkish subject, "this would in no wise impair the Chief's right as an independent Ruler to dispose of the claims". The way in which Shaikh ^CIsā handled such an approach was, however, a matter of some importance. It would be necessary for the Sheikh to be "most careful and guarded, so as to avoid making any admission to the Turkish authorities, and at the same time to avoid giving unnecessary offence". Appeal to the British authorities would not be necessary. On the other hand, any attempt by the Turkish authorities "to interfere actively" in Bahrain in support of the ^{Al} ^CAbdallah would raise the question of sovereignty. In this event Shaikh ^CIsā "would doubtless count, as hitherto, on the mediation of the British Government". For the present, the Acting Resident emphasized, the Shaikh should be "both guarded and courteous in his communications with Turkish authorities, which he should invariably bring to the knowledge of Government".¹

It seems clear that although the British were not averse in 1873 to direct contact between Shaikh ^CIsā and foreign powers, they wanted to exercise a degree of control and supervision over such contacts. In March 1873 this was apparently required by the Acting Resident more as a check on any tendency to rashness by the Shaikh rather than for reasons of suspicion of his motives. It was not long, however, before the British came to have more reason to distrust the ruler of Bahrain. This distrust grew up as Shaikh ^CIsā

¹ Acting Resident, Bushire, to Grant, 8 March 1873, P/769, July 1873, No. 103. These instructions were approved by the Government of India in June 1873. Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Acting Resident, 3 June 1873, P/769, July 1873, No. 104.

became increasingly disenchanted about the nature of the protection the British were extending to him and to the possessions he claimed.

By the Convention of 1861 between the Shaikh of Bahrain and the British Government, the former had agreed to abstain from acts of maritime aggression only on condition that he received the support of the latter in maintaining the security of his "own possessions" from similar aggression.¹ Among the "possessions" which successive Shaikhs of Bahrain, including ^ḲIsā b. Ali, considered to be theirs were certain mainland territories in Qatar. The appearance of the Turkish flag in Qatar in 1871 now raised the question of the exact nature of the "possessions" of the Shaikh of Bahrain which the British had contracted to protect. Any conflict between the Turks and Bahrain over sovereignty in Qatar threatened to entangle Britain on the mainland of Arabia with a power of considerable significance in world diplomacy.

On 16 August 1873 Charles Grant reported from Bahrain to Pelly's successor as Resident, Colonel E.C. Ross, that Hussain Effendi, a Turkish official, with an escort of 100 men had sailed from Qatīf to Zubāra on the north-western coast of Qatar.² As the original mainland settlement of the Āl Khalīfa, Zubāra was regarded by them with special sentiment. Zubāra was, moreover, of more practical concern: lying only about twenty miles and four hours

1 Aitchison, XI, p. 235.

2 Grant to Ross, 16 August 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 412.

sailing time from the southern tip of Bahrain, it was a most convenient place from which an invasion of the island could be launched, as the Āl Khalīfa themselves had proved in 1783.

The news of Hussain Effendi's move against Zubāra in August 1873, was, therefore, naturally of much concern to Shaikh ^CIsā. In conversation with Grant, the Shaikh claimed that the chief tribe of the Zubāra area, the Na^Cīm, were his subjects.¹ Later he even claimed that the agreement of 1861 had laid down that Zubāra was a dependency of Bahrain.² This was, as Grant pointed out, not correct. The agreement did not even mention either the Na^Cīm or Zubāra, neither did it specify what the dependencies of Bahrain were.³ It was discovered that the intention of Hussain Effendi in going to Zubāra was to induce the chief of the Na^Cīm to acknowledge Turkish rule.⁴ This threatened clash of sovereignty in Qatar between the Turks and Bahrain gave rise to discussions as to what rights, if any, Britain should recognise Shaikh ^CIsā as having on the mainland.

1 Precs of a conversation between Grant and Shaikh ^CIsā on 16 August 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 414.

2 Statement of Shaikh ^CIsā, 2 September 1873, L/P & S/9/23, p. 1315.

3 Grant to Ross, 11 September 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 423.

4 Translation of an extract from a report of Abdul Karīm, Govt. Contractor at Bahrain, 16 August 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 417. This man had just returned from Qatar with intelligence of the proceedings of Hussein Effendi.

Grant was of the opinion that the authority of the Shaikhs of Bahrain in Qatar had, in the past, "varied in proportion to the power of coercion those rulers possessed; if the Chief of Bahrein was strong the tribes acknowledged his supremacy; if he was weak they denied it". "Some years ago" the Na^cīm and many other Qatari tribes had been "in certain ways dependencies of Bahrein".¹ "Of late years", however, any power exercised by the Shaikhs of Bahrain over the Na^cīm had been "merely nominal, if it had existed at all".²

The Resident informed Grant that Pelly had always advised the Shaikh of Bahrain to keep aloof from all complications on the mainland with such powers as the Wahhābīs and the Turks³ and that he, Ross, considered this to be sound advice.⁴ This, of course, was not a definite statement of precisely what Ross considered Shaikh ^cIsā's rights in Qatar to be. In fact, Ross advised the Government of India that the question of "sovereign and feudal rights over places and tribes on the Mainland of Arabia, opposite the Island of Bahrein" was "a complicated one and probably Government would not decide it practicable or expedient to enter into its merits".⁵ At the same time, although the question of sovereignty in Qatar had never been formally decided, the fact was,

1 Grant to Ross, 11 September 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 423.

2 Grant to Ross, 16 August 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 412.

3 This was correct. See for example, Pelly to Shaikh ^cIsā, 19 February 1872, L/P & S/9/20, p. 629.

4 Ross to Grant, 28 August 1873, L/P & S/9/23, p. 1245.

5 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 September 1873, L/P & S/9/23, p. 1229.

in his opinion, that the Turks had "established an influence over all the Guttur Coast as far as the Odeyd boundary". In such circumstances it appeared to him that Shaikh ^ḤIsā did not have the power to protect tribes in Qatar and that this ruler "certainly could not expect the British Government to interfere in a matter where the rights even are involved in doubt and uncertainty".¹ It would appear that Ross, like Grant, considered that sovereignty in Qatar would, in the last analysis, devolve upon whoever was able and willing to make his power felt there.

Pelly himself did not consider the time opportune to be drawn into statements of opinion about the precise limits of Bahraini rights in Qatar. He had ceased to be Resident in 1872, but, since he was in Simla in the latter half of 1873, the Government of India presented the relevant papers to him for remarks. On 27 October 1873 he gave his opinion that the British should "avoid as far as possible for the present mooted questions of territorial sovereignty". The time for dealing effectively with questions of boundaries and supremacy would be when Turkish aggression had taken a permanent form or had been abandoned.²

The Government of India stated its views on 17 December 1873. Ross was told that the Government

1 Ross to Grant, 28 August 1873, L/P & S/9/23, p. 1245.

2 Pelly to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 27 October 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 420.

"approved of the tenor" of his letter of 28 August to Grant, and that they concurred generally in the views expressed by Pelly on 27 October. It was "desirable" that the Shaikh of Bahrain "should abstain as far as practicable from interfering in complications on the mainland".¹ It was to become clear, in the course of the following year, that this coincidence of opinion was not as close as it appeared. The Government of India was to reveal itself as more anxious than either Ross or Pelly to ensure that Shaikh ^cĪsā should not become involved in "complications" on the mainland with the Turks.

In the course of the summer of 1874 Shaikh ^cĪsā became apprehensive about the possibility of an attack on Bahrain from Qatar.² In fact, in August, Nāsir b. Mubārak, accompanied by 300-400 Banī Hājir, attempted to obtain boats at Bida^c for an invasion of Bahrain.³ It was later reported that the Ottoman Mutasarrif of Hasā, Barrāk b. ^cArair, had connived at this threat to Bahrain.⁴ Shaikh Qāsim was also said to have secretly played a prominent part in encouraging the affair.⁵ The old pro-British ruler of Bida^c, Shaikh Muhammad b. Thānī, though failing, was still a power in Qatar, however. He

- 1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 17 December 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 426.
- 2 Aḥmad b. Abdul Rasūl, News Writer, Bahrain, to Ross, 12 May 1874, L/P & S/9/24, p. 995.
- 3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 3 September 1874, L/P & S/9/25, pp. 233-37.
- 4 Précis of intelligence received from the News Writer, Bahrain, enclosure in Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 7 October 1874, L/P & S/9/25, p. 449.
- 5 Rasūl to Ross, 2 September 1874, P/773, November 1874, No. 191, p. 111.

was able to prevent Nāsir obtaining more than a few dhows. With these the Banī Hājir were able to do no more than plunder a Bahraini vessel off the coast of Qatar. Moreover, the appearance of the Residency vessel May Frere, sent by Ross as a precautionary measure, forced a further change of plan.¹ Nāsir now launched a surprise attack on Zubāra whilst most of the Na^cīm were fishing on the pearl banks. The settlement would certainly have fallen to the Banī Hājir had their attack not been thwarted by warning shots from the British gunboat Hugh Rose. On their return from the pearl-fishing grounds, the Na^cīm were able to drive off the Banī Hājir band.²

By his decisive action in sending gunboats to the Qatar coast, Ross had thwarted Nāsir b. Mubārak's attempt to invade Bahrain. He had also been able to protect the Shaikhdom by confining British action to naval methods alone. At the same time, the fact that the Hugh Rose had gone into action to prevent Zubāra falling into the hands of Shaikh ^cIsā's enemies was a tacit admission of the importance of the settlement in the defence of Bahrain. Further, the threat to Zubāra was not defeated by the Hugh Rose alone. Before the gunboat could arrive off Zubāra it had been necessary for its small summer garrison of Na^cīm to hold off the Banī Hājir attack. Moreover, after this attack had been halted by gunfire from the Hugh Rose, the Banī Hājir had only finally been dispersed by the return of the main body of the Na^cīm from the pearl banks. If Zubāra was to be kept

1 Rasūl to Ross, 8 August 1874, L/P & S/9/25, pp. 245-50.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 12 September 1874, L/P & S/9/25, pp. 238-92.

out of the hands of the enemies of Bahrain it would seem that it was vital for Shaikh ^CIsā to cultivate the friendship of the Na^Cim. In fact it was the practice of Shaikh ^CIsā to make yearly presents to the Na^Cim¹, to the considerable detriment of the finances of his Shaikhdom.²

The episode of the Banī Hājir attack pointed to a practical reason why Shaikh ^CIsā was to maintain so tenaciously an interpretation of his connections with Qatar and the Na^Cim, at variance with the Government of India's altered views on his position. In the Shaikh's mind the vital considerations were the probable form such an assault would take, and the possibility that the naval protection as then provided by the British might not prevent it from succeeding, thus making it essential to preserve an effective traditional means of defence, which the Indian government was attempting to deny him. Everyone in Bahrain feared a repetition of the type of attack in which Shaikh Ali had been killed and the islands plundered in 1869. In the absence of many of Shaikh ^CIsā's men during the pearling season, the Banī Hājir or others could seize several large boats on the pearl banks, use them to cross over from the mainland, and loot Bahrain without necessarily intending to retain possession of it.³ In any event Shaikh ^CIsā himself would probably not survive. It seemed unlikely, moreover, that British assistance would be available to repel

1 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Bushire, 7 May 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 1117.

2 'Administration Reports', 1877-78 and 1886-87.

3 Guthrie to Ross, 25 August 1874, L/P&S/9/25, pp. 265-71.

such a hit-and-run descent. British naval vessels had been continuously stationed off Bahrain during the initial stages of the Turkish occupation of Hasā, but by 1874 this presence had been reduced to the normal level of occasional visits. The Resident stated the general policy of naval protection in May 1874:¹

... the continuous presence of a ship of war at Bahrein for the protection of the Sheikh cannot be conveniently afforded, and besides it is I think highly desirable the Chief of Bahrain should learn to rely on his own resources for the maintenance of his position. So long as he thinks he can count on the constant presence of his foreign support he will surely remain careless and apathetic and adequate efforts will not be made to strengthen his position by good administration and a conciliatory policy towards his people.

To Shaikh ^CIsā such occasional visits were obviously not a sufficient security. By the time a gunboat in another part of the Gulf could respond to news of a threatened attack, the assault would already have been made.² Therefore the continuation of traditional relations with the Na^Cīm of Qatar was of crucial importance to the Shaikh's own safety, not only in order to cover likely points of departure such as Zubāra, but also to furnish an additional source of manpower which could be moved rapidly to Bahrain itself in emergencies. Helping the Na^Cīm to defend Zubāra was a necessary form of insurance in case British protection proved inadequate or arrived too late.

The interest which the Shaikh of Bahrain had in Zubāra and the Na^Cīm was given further recognition by Ross during a visit to Bahrain

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 29 May 1874, L/P&S/9/24, p. 993.

2 It was even possible that a naval vessel actually at Bahrain would be physically unable to stop a swift landing by boats approaching Bahrain through certain shallow and unsurveyed waters to the south of the island.

in November 1874. On being asked by Shaikh ^CIsā whether he might reinforce the Na^Cīm at Zubāra with additional men, Ross had replied that he would not oppose this as a purely defensive measure.¹ Ross in the previous year had written of the need for the Shaikh of Bahrain to keep aloof from all complications on the mainland with the Turks. By allowing Shaikh ^CIsā to take action to secure his position on a part of the mainland in which the Turks had already shown interest, Ross was certainly not restraining the Shaikh from becoming involved in any "complications". The attempt of Nāsir b. Mubārak to capture Zubāra during the summer had impressed Ross with the importance of taking precautions against allowing the settlement to become a base for the invasion of Bahrain.

The Hugh Rose's defence of Zubāra had, however, already brought a diplomatic attack on the Home Government by the Turks. In October 1874, the Ottoman Ambassador in London, lodged a protest about the shelling of Banī Hājir tribesmen by a British gunboat "dans les Parages de Nedjd". The Porte had added that if the commander of the gunboat had had any complaints he should have applied to the Ottoman authorities for satisfaction.² This note represented the first open Ottoman claim to sovereignty over any part of the Arab coast of the Gulf east of Hasā. With both the Turks and Shaikh ^CIsā now

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 10 November 1874, L/P & S/9/25, pp. 541-44.

2 Ottoman Foreign Minister to Musurus Pasha, 10 October 1874, (tel.), enclosure in Foreign Office to India Office, 13 October 1874, L/P & S/3/92, pp. 309-11.

openly claiming sovereignty over Zubāra, the chances of the British becoming embroiled in Qatar affairs had increased.

When the Government of India discovered that Ross had given Shaikh ^CIsā permission to reinforce Zubāra, they censured the Resident for his action. Ross's despatches of 4 and 19 September 1873 about the rights of the Shaikh of Bahrain in Qatar had "shown that the Chief of Bahrein had no possessions on the mainland of Gutter, and that his rights there were of a very uncertain character".¹ Accordingly, the Government of India stated, they had told Ross on 17 December 1873 that it was desirable that Shaikh ^CIsā should "abstain, as far as practicable, from interfering in complications on the mainland". He should not, therefore, have been encouraged to send troops to the mainland to reinforce the Na^Cim. On the contrary, he should be advised to rely on the British Government for support which would, if necessary, be given him "either to repel attacks by sea, or to frustrate a threatening movement from the mainland".²

The claim of the Government of India that the Resident's

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 10 December 1874, P/774, February 1875, No. 303, p. 266 (stress in original).

2 Ibid.

despatches of 4 and 19 September 1873 had shown that Shaikh ^cIsā had no possessions in Qatar does not seem easy to support. It is true that Ross, in his letter to Grant of 28 August 1873, had spoken of the Turks having established "an influence" over the whole Qatar coast and of the inability of Shaikh ^cIsā to protect tribes residing in Qatar. Even so, in the same letter, Ross had stated quite definitely that "the subject of the sovereignty over Guttur appears never to have been formally decided".¹ In the two despatches actually mentioned by the Government of India² the Resident certainly did not go to the lengths of declaring that the Shaikh of Bahrain had no possessions in Qatar. Indeed, in his letter of 4 September 1873, Ross had suggested that the question of sovereign and feudal rights over places and tribes on the mainland was one which the Government of India might profitably shelve.³ The statement of the Government of India that Shaikh ^cIsā had "no possessions" in Qatar also ran counter to the advice of ex-Resident Pelly that questions of territorial sovereignty on the Arab side of the Gulf ought to be avoided.⁴

The Government of India were therefore, in their despatch of 10 December 1874, taking a firm line against Shaikh ^cIsā's claims in Qatar, in spite of the advice they had received in September and October 1873 from both Ross and Pelly, both of whom had advised a

1 Ross to Grant, 28 August 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 415.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 September 1873, P/770, December 1873, No. 411, p. 305; and Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., December 1873, 19 September 1873, P/770, No. 421.

3 See above, p. 90.

4 See above, p. 91.

policy of caution and procrastination. In December 1873 India had been prepared to accept this advice. Between December 1873 and December 1874, however, there had occurred the Hugh Rose's defence of Zubāra and the consequent Turkish claim to the settlement. The result had been not only the firm ruling by the Government of India that Shaikh ^cIsā had no possessions in Qatar but also their most dubious attempt to claim that this ruling dated from Ross's letters to them of September 1873 on this issue.¹ If the Government of India had indeed come to this decision as early as 1873, there is no real evidence of it in their letter to Ross of 17 December in that year. Their decision to set their faces against Shaikh ^cIsā's claims in Qatar dates not from their receipt of the opinions of Ross and Pelly in late 1873 but, probably, from late 1874, with the news that the action of the Hugh Rose had given the Turks the opportunity to lay claim to Zubāra.

With regard to Shaikh ^cIsā's claims in Qatar, the British were faced with a dilemma. They could either countenance these claims and thereby involve themselves in friction with the Turks, or disallow them and thereby make the Āl Khalīfa dissatisfied with British protection. A decision as to which course to take could only be shelved as long as events in the Zubāra area permitted such a policy of procrastination. When, in the summer of 1874, Zubāra came under pressure from the Āl ^cAbdallah, the British who were actually in the Gulf had to decide how they would act: to intervene in defence of Zubāra or not. Whatever the decision, the policy of

¹ Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 761, apparently accepts this claim at face value, citing only the Government of India's letter of 10 December 1874.

procrastination would, in practice, break down. Action in defence of Zubāra would be implicit recognition that Shaikh ^ḤIsā had, indeed, a legitimate interest in Zubāra, whereas to take no action would, in practice, mean that the British had ruled that the Al Khalīfa had no rights in the area. It is not surprising that the British officials in the Gulf, like Ross, were, in the absence of a clear-cut ruling by the Government of India, drawn into the countenancing of intervention in Qatar. It is also understandable that the Government of India should have been less concerned with the claims of Shaikh ^ḤIsā and more concerned with avoiding friction with the Turks than Ross. Where the Government of India appear to have done less than justice to Ross was in censuring him in December 1874 for failing to act in accordance with a clear-cut policy decision which had not apparently been made until then.

When Ross communicated the feelings of the Government of India to the Shaikh¹, the latter proved most stubborn over what he considered to be his rights in Qatar. In March 1875 he informed Ross that it was necessary for him to intervene on the mainland as far as Zubāra was concerned. The settlement was his property, its inhabitants were dependent on him and, Shaikh ^ḤIsā added pointedly, "we are all dependent on the British Government".²

1 Ross to Shaikh ^ḤIsā, 12 December 1874, R/15/2/29, p. 36. The Government of India had sent a telegram to Ross on 10 December outlining the contents of their letter of the same date. See Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 10 December 1874, tel. No. 2722P, ibid., p. 35.

2 Shaikh ^ḤIsā to Ross, 4 March 1875, R/15/2/29, p. 42.

When Ross reported to the Government of India that Shaikh ^CIsā was still stubbornly clinging to the rights which he claimed in Qatar, the Resident was told to inform the Shaikh that action might be taken against him should he ignore the advice he had already been given.¹ At the India Office the Secretary of the Political and Secret Department, Owen Tudor Burne, had to concede that the claim of the Shaikh of Bahrain over the mainland was "perfectly legitimate". At the same time he felt that, from the British point of view, the orders that the Government of India had issued on Zubāra had much justification.² In the event, neither the India Office nor the Foreign Office chose to overrule these orders.

Shaikh ^CIsā's view of the justice of the way his claims to Zubāra had been treated by the Government of India may be surmised from the fact that, even after 1874, he continued to cultivate relations with the Na^Cīm. Information to this effect was, in fact, received in September 1877 by Grant, at that time the Officiating Resident in the Gulf. He told Shaikh ^CIsā that he had been informed that he had entered into "intimate and friendly relations" with the Na^Cīm of Zubāra whom he was subsidising and allowing to frequent his islands. Further, Shaikh ^CIsā was said to have recruited one hundred Na^Cīm into his army in Bahrain and to have been making it a practice to

1 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 13 May 1875, No. 98, L/P & S/7/3, pp. 959-70.

2 Minute by Burne, 8 June 1875, quoted in Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 790. This minute may be found in L/P & S/3/191, pp. 763-64. Lieutenant E.A. Fraser, of Ross's own staff at Bushire, was of the same opinion, see Fraser to Ross, 18 December 1874, L/P & S/9/24, p. 706.

send them to Zubāra when that settlement was threatened by bedouin tribes. In this way, Grant told the Shaikh, he had shown no regard for the advice he had been given not to interfere in mainland affairs. By sending armed men by sea to Zubāra he had also broken his tracial engagements with the British Government.¹

Shaikh ^CIsā denied that he had sent armed men to the mainland. The Na^Cīm who had gone back to the mainland from Bahrain had done so of their own accord when they had heard that Zubāra was threatened by their enemies. It was true that he allowed men of the Na^Cīm to frequent Bahrain but this was necessary to defend the island when the native inhabitants were away at the pearl fishery. As for the presents he was in the habit of giving to the Na^Cīm, this was also necessary to prevent them from "doing mischief" and joining such enemies of his as Nāsir b. Mubārak.²

When reporting his proceedings to the Government of India on 3 November 1877, Grant showed something of the same tendency to take an understanding attitude to Shaikh ^CIsā's cultivations of the Na^Cīm as Ross had shown in November 1874. Grant conceded that the Shaikh deserved censure for not "adhering more closely to the advice of Government" to avoid entanglement in mainland affairs. At the same time he suggested that³

1 Grant to Shaikh ^CIsā, 17 September 1877, P/1036, December 1877, No. 191, p. 141.

2 Shaikh ^CIsā to Grant, 12 October 1877, P/1036, December 1877, No. 192, pp. 141-42.

3 Grant to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 3 November 1877, P/1036, December 1877, No. 190, p. 141.

the extreme difficulty of the position in which he is placed may justly be urged in extenuation of his conduct. The propinquity of Zobarah to Bahrein makes it a constant source of danger to Sheikh Eesa, and were he to offend the Naim tribe, who live there, by closing his islands against them, they would certainly coalesce with the Beni Hajer, in which case it would probably not be long before an invasion of Bahrein would be attempted.

On this occasion the Government of India concurred in the views of Grant and took no further action in the matter.¹ They were now showing greater willingness to permit Shaikh ^cIsā to risk Ottoman displeasure by cultivating his links with a tribe which, since October 1874, the Turks had openly claimed to be under their jurisdiction. It is not impossible that this was the result of a change of Viceroy. In April 1876 Lord Northbrook had been replaced by Lord Lytton, a man with a greater taste for bold action than his predecessor.² As far as Gulf policy was concerned, Lytton was "disposed to take a more positive line" than Northbrook towards the Turks.³

On the other hand, there were wider diplomatic considerations which, in the period 1877-78, made it unlikely that the Home Government would be willing to allow the Government of India to provoke the Turks in the Gulf area. The reverses of the Turkish

1 Saldanha, 'Precis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854-1904', p. 50.

2 Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (Cambridge 1971), p. 132.

3 Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 768.

forces in Europe at the hands of the Russians at this time had made the British Government even more determined than previously to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, at least in Asia.¹

The effect of these considerations on British policy in the Gulf was noted by Owen Tudor Burne in October 1878.²

Up to the present time the Government of India have looked upon the extension of Turkish influence in [Arabia] (and therefore indirectly into the Persian Gulf) with disfavour; indeed in India it has been deemed to be a danger to our interests, and not many years ago the Foreign Office here was hotly engaged in challenging diplomatically the right of the Porte to any portion of the Coast. Now matters are temporarily altered. We are at present open friends with the Porte, and if that friendship is to be lasting it may possibly be to our interests to as openly acknowledge her sovereignty over that portion of the Coast, over which it is absolute and unmistakeable, or even to permit an extension.

Clearly, no policy decision on the lines of Burne's suggestion could be taken without further, careful consideration. Even so the events of 1878 were to show that the policy towards Zubāra of the Government of India under Lord Lytton was not so radically different from that of the Northbrook administration.

In the course of this year, ¹⁸⁷⁸ the Na^{Ch}īm of Zubāra had made themselves obnoxious to their neighbours by a series of piracies. In reporting the piracies, Ross pointed out that the claims of the Shaikh of Bahrain to Zubāra had been disallowed by the Government

1 See Benjamin Disraeli, then Prime Minister, to Sir Henry Layard, British Ambassador, Constantinople, 6 August 1877 (secret), quoted in H.M.V. Temperley and L.M. Penson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy, 1792-1902 (London, 1966), p. 360. See also Robert Taylor, Lord Salisbury (London, 1975), p. 63.

2 Minute of Burne, 10 October 1878, L/P & S/3/214, p. 177.

of India.¹ Under such circumstances, they could hardly demand retribution from Shaikh ^ḤIsā, even though this ruler had implicated himself in the piracy of a Qatari vessel in September by shortly afterwards giving hospitality to the chief of the Na^Ḥīm of Zubāra. On the other hand, in October 1874, the Turks had indicated that they felt themselves to be responsible for the Na^Ḥīm. In view of these Turkish pretensions to sovereignty over Zubāra, Ross suggested to the Government of India that, should they sanction any direct action against the Na^Ḥīm, it might be "necessary and expedient that it should be taken with the acquiescence of the Turkish Government".² The Government of India directed Ross to ask the Turkish authorities in the Gulf to have Zubāra punished, and to offer British naval assistance for the purpose.³

Before anything of the kind could be accomplished, Zubāra was punished by a different agency. On 1 November the commander of H.M.S. Arab, which was on guard duty at Bahrain, heard that one thousand Banī Hājir and other tribesmen were besieging Zubāra. On crossing to the Qatar coast the following day, however, he found all was quiet and returned to Bahrain. Within a few days news was received that Nāṣir b. Mubārak and Shaikh Qāsim of Bida^Ḥ had arrived at Zubāra. Shaikh ^ḤIsā asked the commander of H.M.S. Arab to return

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- 1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, 20 & 24 September 1878, (tels.), P/1219, November 1878, Nos. 108 & 112, pp. 49 & 50.
 - 2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, 1 October 1878, P/1219, December 1878, No. 26, p. 8.
 - 3 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 5 October 1878, tel. No. 2170P, P/1219, November 1878, No. 115, p. 51.

to the settlement. The latter, however, refused on the grounds that his standing orders were to protect Bahrain and no more.¹ In the absence of British naval action, Nāsir and Shaikh Qāsīm were able to succeed where the Banī Hājir had failed when confronted by the Hugh Rose in the summer of 1874. Two thousand men, under the command of the Āl ʿAbdallah exile and the Shaikh of Bida^c, launched an attack on Zubāra and destroyed it.²

When Ross heard the news he immediately set sail in H.M.S. Teazer and reached Bahrain on 17 November 1878. Shaikh ʿĪsā begged Ross to go to the assistance of the Na^cīm. The Resident refused but, in order to ascertain the real state of affairs for himself, went to Zubāra the next day. Ross found the settlement was indeed completely destroyed and five hundred Na^cīm were closely besieged in an outlying fort. In accordance with the current British policy of regarding Zubāra as an area outside their concern, Ross decided not to intervene in the conflict on the mainland. He warned Shaikh Qāsīm, however, that any attack on Bahrain by him or Nāsir b. Mubārak would be repulsed by British naval power.³

Ross then sailed back to Bahrain where he received a telegram from the Governor of Basra, with whom he had previously been in contact about the question of the proposed punishment of Zubāra. The message

1 Commander F.R. Dicken of H.M.S. Arab to Ross, 18 November 1878, P/1387, January 1879, No. 242, pp. 202-03; News-Agent, Bahrain to Ross, 11 November 1878, P/1387, January 1879, No. 247, pp. 204-05.

2 For Kelly's account of the destruction of Zubāra, see Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 791-92.

3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 26 November 1878, P/1387, January 1879, No. 238, p. 199.

asked Ross to arrange for the Turkish gunboat, the Iskanderia, which was in the area, to be sent to Zubāra to restore peace and to warn Shaikh Qāsīm not to attack Bahrain. Ross found the Iskanderia anchored at Rās Tanura and delivered the message.¹ The Turkish commander arranged a truce between the Na^cīm and their attackers. Most of the Na^cīm now decided to remove to Bida^c with Shaikh Qāsīm whilst the rest migrated to Bahrain.²

Ross observed that, whilst the destruction of Zubāra could not be condoned, the events of the preceding weeks might in the end be for the best as far as Bahrain was concerned. The establishment of a Turkish post in the vicinity of Zubāra, he considered, "would now be the best means of finally terminating the panics to which Bahrein has for years been periodically subject" because of the plotting of the Al^c Abdallah.³

That Ross should have considered that the establishment of a Turkish base in the Zubāra area would be of assistance in allaying the fear of Shaikh Isā of invasion from Qatar seems, on the face of it, most surprising. It is true that, in August 1873, he had stated his opinion that the Turks had established "an influence" over the whole Qatar coast.⁴ Even so Ross also knew that the Turks had a long-standing claim to Bahrain. The explanation for the somewhat

1 Ibid.

2 News Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 9 December 1878, P/1387, January 1879, No. 259, p. 211.

3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 26 November 1878, P/1387, January 1879, No. 238, p. 200.

4 See above p. 91.

puzzling attitude of Ross to the significance of Turkish influence on the west coast of Qatar may be sought in a letter he wrote to the Government of India in January 1879, in response to a request Ross had to give his opinions on the extent of Turkish jurisdiction on the Arab coast of the Gulf.¹ As far as the section of coast between ^cUqair and Bida^c (the stretch which included the Zubāra area) was concerned, Ross believed that the Turks might "with some reason argue that their present actual position" was one of virtual domination over the entire tract. The Resident also pointed out how this had come about:²

We have, in fact, rather prepared the way for recognition of the eventual establishment of Turkish rule by gradually withdrawing from active supervision and control over this portion of the mainland coast.

Although Ross did not say so, this withdrawal had come about through the initiative of the Government of India in their desire to avoid diplomatic embarrassment with the Turks. Ross also refrained from noting that, until checked by the Government of India, the tendency of the actions of both himself and Grant with regard to the west coast of Qatar had been towards greater involvement in the affairs of the area, either by direct British agency or through the Shaikh of Bahrain. Ross did, however, recommend that, since the Government of India had refused to recognise Shaikh ^cIsā's claim to Zubāra and had warned him against interfering in the affairs of the mainland, the establishment of Turkish sovereignty along the Qatar coast as far

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 17 December 1878, No. 255 C.P., L/P & S/7/22, p. 902.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 20 January 1879, No. 30, L/P & S/7/22, p. 905.

as Bida^C should not be opposed. His reasoning was as follows:¹

The territory [the ^CUqair-Bida^C stretch of coast] has ... been for some years in what may be termed a transition state, the exercise of British coercion having been abandoned, and no other control of a similar nature substituted. This is obviously an unsatisfactory condition and one that could not be long permitted without evil results. Some definite responsibility is very requisite.

In other words, Ross was advocating a Turkish presence on the mainland close to Bahrain because, in view of the Government of India's disinclination to assume the responsibility for policing the area, the only other alternative was chaos. He cautioned, however, that he could "find no instance recorded in which appeals to the Turkish authorities through Political Officers in Turkish Arabia", with regard to pirate attacks launched from Territory claimed by the Ottomans, had "elicited any satisfactory result".²

It would be interesting to know if Ross had deliberately framed his letter to the Government of India in such a way as to try to show them the hazards entailed in their policy towards the west coast of Qatar, but to do this without directly attacking that policy. In other words, it may be suspected that Ross was deliberately trying to induce a reconsideration of British policy on the west coast of Qatar. Whatever Ross's real intentions, after Lord Lytton's Government had considered the Resident's letter, this policy was indeed reconsidered.

In response to one of the other problems in the region, the

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 909.

dispute between the shaiks of Abū Dhabī and Qatar over 'Udaid at the eastern foot of the Qatar peninsula, the Government of India produced a major review of its entire Gulf policy with regard to the limits of Turkish jurisdiction on the Arab littoral, and the resulting Turkish responsibilities for the maintenance of order. Its despatch of 22 May 1879 noted that, should it be left to the Turks to deal with maritime aggressions from territories which they claimed, it was not likely that they would prove to be effective policemen as far as the British were concerned. Moreover, as the history in the Gulf of the British themselves had shown, one result of accepting the charge of policing these waters was the acquisition of naval supremacy there. "Any policy which encourages the extension and predominance in the Persian Gulf of the Turkish power, must tend proportionately to modify the distribution of power and influence throughout those waters."¹ In view of considerations such as these, the Government of India were not inclined to admit or recognise Turkish jurisdiction on the Arab coast of the Gulf except wherever it then practically existed. In particular, they²

should be averse to enter into any discussions which might appear to countenance claims by the Turkish Government to recognition of its authority beyond Ojair, or upon any part of the coast of the El Katr promontory, except at El Bidaa, where the Turks appear to have some real influence and representation.

The Turks were not, after all, to be encouraged to establish themselves at Zubāra. Nevertheless, the Government of India would not

1 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State, 22 May 1879, Secret No. 127, L/P & S/7/22, p. 879. The same point had in fact been made by the Government of India in their Letter No. 255 C.P. of 17 December 1878, to Ross (L/P & S/7/22, p. 902).

2 Ibid.

reconsider its prohibition on the Shaikh of Bahrain intervening in mainland affairs to pre-empt any threat to his Shaikhdom. The Shaikh should still abstain "from all interference with the mainland". At the same time, "in the event of attack upon his territories", he, "acting under the sanction of the Resident in the Persian Gulf, should be permitted to take such defensive measures as may be necessary, even to the extent of following up his assailants into Turkish jurisdiction". This was considered to be justifiable because Bahrain was situated so close to the mainland that it might be subject to aggression by attackers who could easily escape into Turkish jurisdiction.¹ Shaikh ^CIsā, in other words, was to be granted the right of "hot pursuit" into areas claimed by the Turks, but anything in the way of his traditional "forward policy" with regard to the west coast of Qatar was still frowned upon.

In fact, at the time Lord Lytton was formulating this policy, relations between the Shaikh of Bahrain and his British protectors were strained. He was reported in 1878 to be "much dissatisfied" when the British had not only stood aside and allowed Zubāra to be destroyed by his enemies, but had also prevented him from going to the assistance of his Na^Cīm allies himself.² At the same time, Shaikh ^CIsā could not claim that the British had not acted strictly in accordance with their obligations to Bahrain under the 1861 convention. It is true that, by Article 2 of that agreement³, the British had undertaken to maintain the security of the Shaikh's possessions, which, despite the ruling

1 Ibid.

2 Journal of political events beyond the Indian frontier for December 1878, 17 January 1879, L/P & S/7/21.

3 Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 235.

of the Government of India in December 1874¹, he still considered to include parts of Qatar such as Zubāra. On the other hand, the 1861 convention only bound the British Government to defend the Shaikh's possessions from maritime aggressions, and, in 1878 Zubāra had been attacked only by land. However, whilst the British could claim that, in refusing to take action to defend Zubāra, they were not in breach of the 1861 convention, this claim could not be advanced as far as another grievance of Shaikh 'Isā's in 1878-79 was concerned.

In this period, the inhabitants of Bahrain suffered from the depredations of piratical bands of Banī Hājir and other bedouins operating from the mainland. In about ten instances, vessels belonging to Bahrain were seized and plundered, and communication with Qaṭīf was interrupted for a time.² On 11 February 1879 a particularly daring outrage was committed when thirty Banī Hājir from Dhahrān on the Hasā mainland crossed to Bahrain, raided a settlement only ten miles from Manāma, killed one man and escaped with 200 sheep loaded into two boats.³ By the 1861 convention, the British had undertaken to protect Bahrain and its inhabitants from just such aggressions by sea. In December 1879, however, it had to be admitted by Lord Cranbrook, the Secretary of State for India, that Britain's obligations to preserve law and order at sea in the Gulf had

1 See above, p. 97.

2 'Administration Report', 1878-79, p. 4. Bahrainis were not the only victims. Vessels belonging to inhabitants of Persia, Ras Al Khaimah, Qatar, Qaṭīf, and elsewhere were also taken: Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, No. 205, 21 September 1878, P/1387, January 1879, pp. 231-32.

3 Resident, Bushire, to Govt. of India, F.D., 15 February 1879, Tel. No. 63, L/P & S/9/65, p. 163.

"of late years, owing to the position assumed by the Turkish Government on the Coast, been very imperfectly fulfilled, and it is not to be expected that, under such circumstances, the injured parties will continue to abstain from reprisals on the aggressors".¹ In fact, very soon after the Banī Hājir raid of February 1879, Shaikh ʿIsā had asked the Resident for permission to take punitive action of his own against the Dhahrān pirates, whom he considered to be in league with Nāsir b. Mubārak.² He was, however, strictly forbidden to do so and was told that the British would "look after his interests" and prevent such piratical attacks.³

In fact, Shaikh ʿIsā's British protectors were not as good as their word. Piracies by bedouins from the interior posed a difficult problem for the British, because the offenders did not actually live on the coast. If not caught in pursuit, the classic coast-dwelling pirates of the early decades of the century could still be punished in reprisal by seizure of their boats, or by shelling their boats and houses. On the other hand, bedouins who stole a boat on the coast, put to sea on raids, and then escaped inland could not be coerced by gunboats. The only effective solution was action by authorities on the mainland. Thus the British were unable to obtain restitution for the property stolen⁴ and, moreover, the acts of piracy continued.

1 Cranbrook to Foreign Office, 29 December 1879, No. 984, L/P & S/3/223, pp. 839,40.

2 Shaikh ʿIsā to Ross, 11 February 1879, P/1390, September 1879, No. 198, p. 164.

3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 31 March 1879, L/P & S/9/65, p. 391.

4 Ibid.

The Turkish occupation of Hasā in 1871 had placed the British in a dilemma as to how to carry out their obligation to preserve the peace of the seas in this general area. The problem was that the Turks, whilst claiming jurisdiction over the waters off the Hasā and Qatar coasts, did little or nothing to prevent the use of these waters, or indeed, the mainland itself, as a base for pirates. To some extent this seems to have been because of the general ineffectiveness of Turkish administration in this area. At the same time, as Ross observed in July 1879, it was quite possible that "the annoyance to Bahrein commerce is not wholly displeasing to officials who hope eventually to see British influence and authority displayed by Turkish in those coveted islands".¹

Ross was not alone in his estimate. The officiating Resident and Consul-General at Baghdad, Colonel S.B. Miles, stated his opinion that the Turks would prefer the continuance of the piratical disorders²

in order that they may with more colour put forth the pretext that Bahrein is the cause of them, and that they cannot put them down until Bahrein is in their hands. They are seeking, in short, for a cause of quarrel and a pretext to interfere and conquer.

Miles went on to claim that the Turkish authorities at Basra hoped

that the Sheikh and people of Bahrein, finding the British Resident no longer able to protect their ships at sea as heretofore, and unable to ensure them redress and reparation for losses at the hands of Turkish pirates, will turn at last to him and accept the sovereignty of the Sultan as the price of future peace and security.

1 Ross to Govt. of India, 16 July 1879, No. 249, L/P & S/7/23, p. 367.

2 Miles to Sir Henry Layard, British Ambassador, Constantinople, 5 August 1879, No. 88, L/P & S/3/221, p. 1023.

If Ross and Miles were right about Turkish motives, then a policy of relying on the Turks to act decisively to help prevent piracies in the seas near Bahrain did not hold out much hope of success. At this time, however, Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, was continuing the policy of conciliation towards the Porte which had been such a feature of the period 1877 to 1878.¹ He was therefore reluctant to permit warships of either the Shaikh of Bahrain or the Royal Navy to intervene without Turkish permission in waters claimed by the Turks. Salisbury recognised that the measures taken against piracy in the Gulf by the Turks in the past had been inadequate. They had, however, promised "further exertions and fresh naval reinforcements". In view of this, "having settled for ourselves the limits within which Turkish jurisdiction may be admitted" in the Gulf "we should as a general rule look to the Turkish authorities to exercise a proper police in those limits".²

In the course of 1879, it became increasingly clear that, at least as far as Bahrain was concerned, the Turkish authorities were in little mood to act in a conciliatory fashion themselves. In April 1879 P.J.C. Robertson, the Assistant Political Agent at Basra, learned that ^cAbdallah Pasha, the Turkish wālī of Basra, intended to establish a coaling depôt on Bahrain, in the charge of an agent who would be virtually a Political Agent. The task of this person would

1 See above pp. 103-4, and Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 807. In 1879 Salisbury was particularly concerned about the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in Asia in the face of Russian encroachments in the Caucasus. Kenneth Bourne, The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902 (Oxford, 1970), p. 135.

2 Foreign Office to India Office, 23 August 1879, L/P & S/3/221, p. 293.

be to excite discontent and a desire for annexation to Turkey among the inhabitants of the Shaikhdom.¹

Both the India Office² and the Government of India³ agreed that the Turks should be prevented from establishing a coal depot on Bahrain. In the event, the Resident acted before any instructions could reach him. In May 1879 he had already stated his opinion that the wālī of Basra, in pressing this scheme, had "political motives in view".⁴ In June Ross had therefore secured a promise from Shaikh ^ḤIsā that he would take no steps in the matter without first referring to him, and that he would act on his advice.⁵

During 1879, Ross had become increasingly concerned about British relations with Bahrain. In March he had visited Shaikh ^ḤIsā and discovered that both he and his brother Shaikh Ahmad were in "a state of considerable irritation" because of being restrained from punishing the Banī Hājir pirates when the British were unable to obtain restitution for Bahrain from the Turks.⁶ Even earlier, in February 1879, he had been taken aback when Shaikh ^ḤIsā had made a request to be allowed to "'make arrangements ... with the Turks'" to deal with Nāsir b. Mubārak and his provocations against Bahrain.

- 1 Robertson to Col. J.P. Nixon, British Resident and Consul-General, Baghdad, 25 April 1879, No. 143, L/P & S/3/219, p. 707.
- 2 India Office to Foreign Office, 30 May 1879, No. 23, L/P & S/3/219, p. 699.
- 3 Govt. of India to Sec. of State for India, 25 June 1879, No. 151, L/P & S/7/22, p. 1333.
- 4 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 3 May 1879, No. 163, L/P & S/7/22, p. 1358.
- 5 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 June 1879, P/1390, September 1879, No. 351, p. 243.
- 6 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 31 March 1879, L/P & S/9/65, p. 391.

The answer of Ross had been an emphatic 'no'.¹ In fact at this time the British tried to discourage direct contacts between Shaikh ^CIsā and the Turks. On a visit to Bahrain from 11 to 18 March 1879, Ross discovered that Shaikh ^CIsā wanted the island of Zakhnuniyah, off the ^CHasā coast, which had become a resort of pirates, either to be kept uninhabited or handed over to himself for occupation. The Resident, with a view to preventing Shaikh ^CIsā from approaching the Turks directly, told him that his wishes would be made known to them.² Later in 1879, at a time when the Turkish authorities in ^CHasā were in correspondence with Shaikh ^CIsā on the subject of the mutual extradition of offenders³, the Government of India instructed that the Shaikh should be encouraged always to refer to the Resident "to act for him in matters in which the Turks are concerned".⁴ Some months later, Ross reported that he had advised Shaikh ^CIsā that, when questions arose between him and the Turkish authorities, he should "when possible" refer to him.⁵

Of course, the Turks were well aware that there was nothing in the formal relationship between the British Government and the Shaikh of Bahrain, as laid down in the 1861 convention, preventing direct contact between Shaikh ^CIsā and themselves. Not only did they

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 27 February 1879, L/P & S/9/65, p. 261.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 31 March 1879, L/P & S/9/65, pp. 391-97.

3 See for example mutasarriif of ^CHasā to Shaikh ^CIsā, 28 August 1879, P/1391, November 1879, No. 585, p. 329.

4 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 15 November 1879, P/1391, November 1879, No. 588, p. 331.

5 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 14 June 1880, P/1553, July 1880, No. 215, p. 205.

continue to communicate directly with Shaikh ^CIsā by letter¹, but they also increased British apprehensions by sending a Turkish despatch boat to Bahrain in March 1880.

The commander of the vessel asked Shaikh ^CIsā to place a warehouse at his disposal for the storage of coal. The Shaikh avoided giving a direct answer by replying that he would give his decision on the Turkish request if and when the commander's superior, the mutasarrif of Hasā, made such a demand.² On hearing of the incident, Ross had ordered that Shaikh ^CIsā should be reminded of the undertaking he had given in June 1879 not to permit the establishment of a Turkish coal depôt on Bahrain without first asking the advice of the British.³ Shaikh ^CIsā had replied that he intended to keep his word.⁴ But despite such assurances of fidelity, Ross's suspicions about the bona fide nature of the dealings of the Āl Khalīfa with the Turks were not allayed.

These suspicions were increased by a despatch of 5 November 1880 from the News Agent in Bahrain. The Agent reported that it was common talk on the island that the Ottoman Government intended appointing an Agent in Bahrain and setting up a coaling depôt there. Although Shaikh ^CIsā had stated that he disapproved of such talk, the News Agent reported more suspicious facts, concerning a Turkish subject, Mujbil al-Dhukhair, who had lived in Bahrain for the last two years,

1 See for example, Sa^Cid Pasha mutasarrif of Najd to Shaikh ^CIsā, 14 July 1879, L/P & S/9/65, p. 753.

2 News Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 3 March 1880, No. 29, L/P & S/3/226, p. 215.

3 Ross to News Agent, Bahrain, 9 March 1880, P/1552, April 1880, No. 271, p. 265.

4 News Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 19 March 1880, P/1552, April 1882, No. 176, p. 267. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 822.

ostensibly as a trader. Mujbil was "treated with respect" by the Āl Khalīfa, especially Shaikh ʿĪsā's brother, Shaikh Ahmad, whom he visited frequently. It was also said that Shaikh Ahmad "gives his money in deposit" to Mujbil.¹

At the time the News Agent reported on Mujbil al-Dhukhair, Bahrain was yet again under the threat of attack by Nāsir b. Mubārak. As early as June 1880, the News Agent had reported to Ross that Nāsir was at Khaur Shaqīq on the east coast of Qatar and that it was rumoured that he intended to make an attack on Bahrain.² In fact the attempt was not made until December 1880. On 4 December a British gunboat, H.M.S. Beacon, was sent to patrol the Qatar coast. It was not this precautionary action by the British however, but measures taken by the Āl Khalīfa themselves which were largely instrumental in the thwarting of Nāsir b. Mubārak. In November Shaikh ʿĪsā had sent a party of Naʿīmi fighting men to Fuwairit on the Qatar coast to try and thwart Nāsir. Shaikh ʿĪsā was also receiving a constant supply of information on Nāsir's movements from Naʿīmi spies working in Qatar.³ Moreover, when Nāsir did, at last, attempt to secure boats for the invasion of Bahrain, he was thwarted by those inhabitants of western Qatar whose loyalties had been so carefully cultivated by Shaikh ʿĪsā for so many years previously. Thus, when Nāsir arrived at the settlements of Ruwais and Abu Dulūf in early December to demand that their inhabitants surrender their boats to him, he discovered that they had scuttled them

1 News Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 5 November 1880, L/P & S/7/27, p. 1063.

2 News Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 22 June 1880, L/P & S/9/4, p. 1115.

3 See for example, statement of Hamad b. Rashīd, Naʿīmi inhabitant of Bahrain, 1 December 1880, L/P & S/9/65, p. 1191.

already.¹ Nāsir retired with his followers into the interior of Qatar.

In the face of what appeared to be an increasing threat to the status quo in Bahrain from the Turks and their protégés, Ross himself visited the Shaikhdom on 21 December 1880. On the following day he took a decisive step in the development of British relations with Bahrain by concluding a new agreement with Shaikh ^ḤIsā. The Shaikh bound himself, his heirs and his successors in the Government of Bahrain, to abstain from entering into negotiations or making treaties of any sort with any foreign power without the consent of the British Government. Further, he undertook to refuse permission to foreign powers to establish diplomatic or consular agencies or coaling depôts in Bahrain without British consent. The agreement specifically exempted from its provisions "the customary friendly correspondence with the local authorities of neighbouring States on business of minor importance". Lastly, since Ross had made the agreement with Shaikh ^ḤIsā on his own initiative, it was stated that the agreement was subject to the approval and acceptance of the Government of India.²

1 Statement of Muhammad b. Mahanna, inhabitant of Bahrain, 1 December 1880, L/P & S/9/65, p. 1191; Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Bushire, 9 December 1880, L/P & S/7/28, p. 922. See map at the end.

2 'Translation of Agreement signed by the Chief of Bahrain, 22 December 1880', Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 237.

In his report to the Government of India, Ross explained the reasons for his action. He pointed out that it had been "the settled policy" of the Government of India "to exclude the interference of other foreign Powers" in the affairs of Bahrain. Its Shaikh had been "desired to avoid direct communication on political matters" with the Turks who were also to be refused permission to establish a coaling depôt on the island. However, the fact that, in declining to permit the establishment of agencies or coal depôts, the Shaikh was not able to refer to any formal engagement prohibiting such action, had proved to be a source of embarrassment. It was for this reason, Ross claimed, that he had acted "to formalize the actually existing understanding with the Chief of Bahrein".¹

In March 1881, Ross was informed by the Government of India, now under a new Viceroy, Lord Ripon, that, as a general rule, it was inexpedient for Political officers to enter into negotiations of this kind without special instructions.² Even so, the Resident's letter had been forwarded to the India Office with the recommendation that the agreement should be accepted and ratified since it did not "materially increase or alter" Britain's existing responsibilities with regard to Bahrain.³ The India Office and the Foreign

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 24 December 1880, P/1741, March 1881, No. 17, pp. 7-8.

2 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 7 March 1881, P/1741, No. 20, p. 10. See also Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, p. 826.

3 Govt. of India to Sec. of State for India, 14 February 1881, P/1741, March 1881, No. 19, p. 9.

Office agreed with the Government of India¹ and the agreement was duly ratified.

The origins of the 1880 agreement can be traced to the rising challenges to the rule of Shaikh ^ḤIsā in Bahrain during the 1870s. When Ross, in his letter of 24 December 1880, had given his reasons for his initiative in signing the agreement he had indicated the dangers of the Turkish attempt to set up an agency in Bahrain in the guise of a coal depôt. Moreover, although Ross did not specifically mention this in his letter, it is clear that another reason for his action had been the Turkish-backed attempt on Bahrain by Nāsir b. Mubārak in December 1880. It is significant, however, that the 1880 agreement was not only directed against the establishment of diplomatic agencies and coaling depôts in Bahrain. It was also meant to prevent direct negotiations between the Shaikh and foreign powers unless authorised by the British. It is true that, in his letter of 24 December 1880, Ross had been diplomatic enough to justify this measure in terms of the 'convenience' and 'advantage' which it would afford to Shaikh ^ḤIsā by giving him "a reason for declining the overtures of other foreign Powers which would be unanswerable and need give no offence".² Even so, it is clear that, for some time before the signing of the agreement, the Resident had been carefully watching the contacts of the Āl Khalīfa with the Turks. Ross was well aware

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 18 March 1881, L/P & S/3/232, pp. 357-60; Foreign Office to India Office, 30 March 1881, ibid., p. 726.

2 Ross to Govt. of India, 24 December 1880, P/1741, March 1881, No. 17, p. 8.

of the dissatisfaction of Shaikh ^CĪsā with the quality of the protection he had been receiving from the British. This dissatisfaction had centred around two issues: the impunity with which pirates were making use of Turkish territorial waters, and the advance of the power of Turkey's protégé, Shaikh Qāsim, in Qatar. In both instances, the harm done to Shaikh ^CĪsā's interests was not merely a result of the rising challenges to his rule during the 1870s. It was also due to British reluctance, for reasons of their own imperial strategy, to act in a way which would bring them into collision with the Turks on Shaikh ^CĪsā's behalf. It was because of the disaffection on the part of the Āl Khalīfah to which such a policy could give rise that Ross had had to take an initiative which had the effect of formally binding the Shaikh of Bahrain more tightly to Britain.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHALLENGE TO SHAIKH ^cISĀ, 1869-95: PART II, 1881-95

In the period after the signing of the 1880 agreement, the British began to take a stronger line over the two issues which were giving the Āl Khalīfa grounds for dissatisfaction with the standard of British protection: the advance of the power of the Āl Khalīfa's enemies in Qatar and the associated problem of the periodical attempts at launching invasions of Bahrain from the mainland; and, the plunder of Bahraini shipping by pirates operating from Turkish-claimed territory.

On 26 February 1881, Ross recommended to the Government of India that, in view of the record of the Shaikh of Bida^c in instigating attacks on Bahrain, Shaikh Qāsim "should be specially and distinctly warned that any hostile attempts headed by Nasir against Bahrein would be attributed to him".¹ Further, the Ottoman authorities should be asked to watch the activities of Nāsir b. Mubārak.² T.J.C. Plowden, the Consul-General at Baghdad, commented that past experience suggested that "no practical result" would come of such a request for the Turks to supervise Nāsir. If the

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 26 February 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 928. Ross had in fact just warned Shaikh Qasim that should Nāsir "find means to disturb the peace from your neighbourhood the consequences would be disastrous to you". Ross to Qāsim, 25 February 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 930.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 26 February 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 928.

Al 'Abdallah and Shaikh Q̄asim made yet another move against Bahrain "they should be dealt with under the orders of the Resident in the Persian Gulf in such manner as the circumstances of the case may seem to require".¹ The Government of India accepted Plowden's advice, and in May 1881 instructed Ross to warn Shaikh Q̄asim that, if he was "in any manner accessory to an attack upon Bahrein Island", he would be "held directly responsible".² At the same time Plowden was asked to tell the Turkish authorities in Baghdad that, unless they could undertake to prevent and punish any attack on Bahrain from the territories they claimed, the Government of India might have to take the matter into its own hands.³ The British Ambassador in Constantinople, G.J. Goschen, also concluded that it was pointless to pursue the subject with the Turks any further. The British officers in the Gulf should "receive instructions based on the view that it is hopeless to expect the authority from the Porte to follow the Pirates within Turkish territorial waters".⁴

In February 1881, the Turkish Foreign Minister, 'Asim Pasha, claimed that there was no piracy along the Hasā coast. Further, he warned, no British naval action was required in the area because, purely as a precautionary measure, a Turkish gunboat had been sent

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- 1 Plowden to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 10 March 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 935.
 - 2 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 7 May 1881, (tel.), L/P & S/7/28, p. 936.
 - 3 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Plowden, 7 May 1881, tel. No. 948 E.P., L/P & S/7/28.
 - 4 Goschen to Granville, 6 December 1880, No. 643, L/P & S/3/232, pp. 265-66.

to patrol there.¹ The India Office suggested that there now remained no alternative to taking measures to put a stop to piracy in the Gulf without reference to the territorial claims of the Turks. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Hartington, therefore proposed that the commanders of British gunboats operating in the Gulf should be given a more or less free hand to suppress piracy along the Arab coast, "collision with Turkish Cruizers or troops being, of course, scrupulously avoided".² On 11 July 1881, the Foreign Office sent instructions to the Admiralty that British naval officers in the Gulf should in the future not "allow themselves ... to be too much hampered by the Öttoman three mile limit in pursuing and capturing pirates". At the same time, in doing so, they were to avoid clashes with the Turks, hand over to them all captives taken in Turkish jurisdiction and report all operations within the three mile limit to the British Consul-General in Baghdad for communication to the Ambassador in Constantinople.³

At about the same time an opportunity presented itself to put the state of affairs in Qatar on a more satisfactory footing. Although Shaikh Qāsim had accepted the Turkish flag, and had later been appointed a qā'im-maqām, in May 1881 Ross reported that the Shaikh

1 Cāsim Pasha to British Chargé d'Affaires, Constantinople, 8 February 1881 (in French), L/P & S/3/232, pp. 273-74.

2 India Office to Foreign Office, 24 March 1881, L/P & S/3/232, pp. 253-57.

3 Foreign Office to Admiralty, 11 July 1881, L/P & S/3/234, pp. 777-79. For the transmission of these instructions to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, see E.N. Swainson, Admiralty to W. Gore, Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, 19 July 1881, No. 199, Adm. 127/31.

was uneasy about his position with the Ottoman Government. He was willing to place himself under British protection if a way could be found to do this, possibly by renewing the agreement which his father Shaikh Muhammad had signed in 1868.¹ In October 1881, the Government of India observed that the 1868 agreement with Shaikh Muhammad had had "something of a personal character". As its force could be "held to have been weakened, if not annulled" by the Turkish occupation of Bida^c, it had been thought better for the time being "not to lay any stress on it". Even so, if, as seemed possible, Shaikh Qāsim could be persuaded to admit that the 1868 agreement was binding to him, "the result may be to contribute materially to the security of Bahrein and the neighbouring seas".²

In late 1881, however, Shaikh Qāsim's harassment of the Indian trading community of Bida^{c3}, dimmed prospects of better relations. These Indian traders, or banians, had for some time been causing a great deal of annoyance to Shaikh Qāsim by their trading operations. They had become very successful competitors in the pearl trade of Bida^c which had previously been monopolised by the Shaikh. When the banians had first come to Bida^c, they had only made purchases of pearls through Shaikh Qāsim's father.⁴ Later, they began to purchase pearls direct,

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 19 May 1881, P/1742, June 1881, No. 419, p. 273; Shaikh Qāsim to Ross, 9 March 1881, L/P & S/7/28, p. 934.

2 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 26 October 1881, No. 2557 E.P., L/P & S/7/30, p. 369.

3 This was not the first time that Qāsim had harassed the Bida^c banians. See, for example Ahmad Abdul Rasūl, News Writer, Bahrain Resident, Bushire, 24 August 1874, P/773, November 1874, No. 182; Lieut. E.A. Fraser, Acting Second Asst. Resident to Ross, 5 June 1875, P/776, September 1875, No. 62, p. 97; Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, 24 December 1875, P/1031, March 1876, No. 193, p. 177.

4 Answers of Qāsim b. Muhammad b. Thānī in the discussions with Mirzā Abū al-Qāsim, Residency Munshi, operating in the Gulf, 2 July 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 283.

and became more attractive partners than Shaikh Q̄asim himself for those with pearls to sell. The banians were more willing to pay high prices, and more prepared to give ready cash than Shaikh Q̄asim, who preferred to give credit notes if he could.¹ In order to get rid of the banians, Shaikh Q̄asim instigated a number of provocations against them. The Shaikh ordered the shops of the banians to be closed. The levies which the banians had had to pay him were increased stage by stage with the idea of squeezing his trading rivals so much that they would decide to leave Bida^c. Finally, Shaikh Q̄asim had ordered his subjects to default in the repayment of debts owed to these traders.²

Ross stressed in his report that there had been no misbehaviour on the part of the banians to provoke such treatment. However, in the opinion of Ross, Shaikh Q̄asim had not been motivated in his actions solely by greed. It was significant that he had chosen a time when the question of his relationship to the British was under consideration. In the Resident's view, the Shaikh was using the banians issue as a test case. Ross observed that:³

He does not feel sure what his position is now in relation to the British Government, and, no doubt, wishes to draw conclusions from observing the course adopted by British authority with reference to his proceedings. If he perceives that we abstain from direct action, he will consider himself secure of impunity through Turkish prestige and indifference, and will probably proceed to greater lengths against our subjects, and may disregard our interests and wishes in other still more important respects. It is a question (and Jasim is quite alive to this) of whether this Sheikh is to be considered as an independent Sheikh, or merely a Turkish Governor, or as something between the two.

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- 1 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Political Resident, Bushire, 26 October 1881, L/P & S/7/31, p. 27.
 - 2 Captain J.P. Nesham, Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, to Ross, 6 November 1881, L/P & S/7/31, p. 29.
 - 3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 12 November 1881, L/P & S/7/31, p. 27.

Ross pointed out further than an appeal to the Turks would be tacit admission of the suzerain status the Turkish authorities claimed at Bida^c.¹ The Government of India agreed, and proposed to inform Shaikh Qāsim that the arbitrary treatment of British Indian subjects could not be permitted and that, in the future, he would be held "directly responsible for any act inconsistent with the friendly relations which have hitherto existed between him and the British Government".²

On the face of it, this was no different from the Indian proposal of May 1881.³ At that time, however, the Government of India was referring to the possibility of direct dealings with the Shaikh in the event of an attempted assault on Bahrain. This would have to be a surprise attack and would therefore have had to be launched from the western coast of Qatar. This coast, although openly claimed by the Turks ever since 1874, had no Turkish garrison presence whatever. This was not the case of Bida^c. Moreover, the January 1882 proposal clearly entailed the possibility that force might have to be used against Shaikh Qāsim, which might bring about a collision with the garrison the Turks maintained at the fort of Bida^c.⁴ British policy had changed considerably since the time, only four years previously,

1 Ibid.

2 Govt. of India to Sec. of State for India, 9 January 1882, No. 3, L/P & S/7/31, p. 25.

3 See above, p. 125.

4 Commentary by Owen Tudor Burne, Sec. of Political and Secret Dept. of India Office, on letter from Govt. of India, 9 January 1882, L/P & S/3/238, pp. 5-9.

when both Ross and the Government of India were prepared to approach the Turks for punishment of the Na^cīm of Zubāra for piracy.¹ Now, in 1882, they were proposing the sanctioning of the possibility of direct action against a Turkish qā'im-maqām over an issue which, although it concerned the treatment of British subjects, was really a matter of his internal administration.

The proposal occasioned debate at the India Office. Sir Frederick J. Halliday, the Chairman of the Council of India, objected, not only on the grounds that Bida^c had been repeatedly recognised as Turkish but also that the proposal would involve a departure from Britain's policy of declining to interfere on land with the Shaikhs of the Arab coast. Halliday was opposed to a policy which involved following "our British Indian subjects all over the world", and redressing "their grievances everywhere great and small, with fire and sword". He was, in fact, in favour of the old policy of attempting to secure redress for the banians from the Turks.²

The Secretary of State for India, Lord Hartington, on the other hand, considered that it might very well be expedient to continue the policy of "non-interference on land" with the Arab Shaikhs as far as their territory disputes were concerned. It was, however, quite a different matter when they proceeded to ill-treat British subjects. To fail to take decisive action to prevent this would fatally weaken British influence in the Gulf.³

1 See Chapter 2, pp. 104-5.

2 Halliday, note of 23 February 1882, L/P & S/3/238, pp. 11-14.

3 Lord Hartington, note of 2 March 1882, L/P & S/3/238, pp. 22-23.

Hartington's estimate of the likely consequences of any failure to take effective action to protect the banians of Bida^C seems judicious. It is known that, at this time, there were other places on the Arab coast of the Gulf where, if Q̄asim had gone unchecked in his harassment of the Bida^C banians, this would have been taken as a signal to deal similarly with the local British Indian traders. On 11 September 1882 the Residency Agent at Bahrain had reported to Ross that, like Shaikh Q̄asim, the merchants of Bahrain were suffering from the competition of banians and were only deterred from injuring them out of fear of the British Government.¹ The consequences to British Indian commercial interests of the spread of harassment of banians throughout the Gulf would be very great. The greatest part of the external trade of the Gulf, totalling more than Rs. 52 million, was at this time in the hands of British Indian subjects.² Lord Hartington's views prevailed and the Foreign Office concurred in sanctioning the procedures recommended by the Government of India.³ Even so, the India Office felt it necessary to advise the Viceroy and his Council that Shaikh Q̄asim's relations with the Porte made it desirable to avoid coercive measures against him for "as long as possible".⁴

1 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 11 September 1882, L/P & S/7/35, pp. 450-51. See also Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 22 August 1882, L/P & S/7/35, p. 444.

2 This was noted by Owen Tudor Burne in a note, n.d., but some time in February or March 1882, L/P & S/3/238, p. 15. The Rs. 52 million was the total value of the import and export trade of the Gulf ports excluding Muscat. About a half was with India direct. Burne quoted these figures from the Persian Gulf Administration Report for 1880-81.

3 Foreign Office to India Office, 13 March 1882, L/P & S/3/238, pp. 279-80.

4 Sec. of State for India to Govt. of India, 24 March 1882, secret No. 19, L/P & S/7/327, pp. 67-69.

Meanwhile, in January 1882, Ross sent Captain Nesham, of H.M.S. Woodlark, to visit Bida^c to see whether Shaikh Qāsim was willing to consider the 1868 agreement as still binding.¹ The Shaikh declared himself strongly in favour of renewing the agreement, modified to meet the circumstances of the time, in particular "the different relations he now held with Bahrein". He also professed himself anxious to get rid of the Turks, whom he regretted ever having allowed into Bida^c.² Ross recommended that the 1868 agreement with the deceased Shaikh Muhammad b. Thānī should be formally renewed with his son Shaikh Qāsim.³

Once more, however, Ross's superiors proved to be a good deal less willing than the Resident to risk collision with the Turks. On 28 April 1882, Ross was informed by the Government of India that they considered it undesirable to risk complications with the Turks by entering into formal relations with Shaikh Qāsim. Since the agreement had been signed with Shaikh Muhammad in 1868, the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Sultan had been established de facto at Bida^c. Although the British Government had never formally recognised this jurisdiction, its existence had not been contested by the Government of India or its officers. Moreover, it seemed likely that Shaikh Qāsim would not be willing to enter into an agreement of the kind suggested with the British Government unless they engaged to protect him against the Turks "in any measures which he might find necessary for the due execution of his obligations". Under these circumstances, the Government of India

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 February 1882, No. 43, L/P & S/7/32, p. 517.

2 Nesham to Ross, 7 February 1882, L/P & S/7/32, pp. 517-18.

3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 February 1882, No. 43, L/P & S/7/32, p. 517.

suggested that Ross should merely obtain from the Shaikh a verbal assurance that he would, as far as possible, observe the terms of the agreement of 1868.¹

By the time the Government of India had sent their instructions to Ross, the policy of caution and delay which they and the Home Government had counselled him to take towards Shaikh Qāsim was beginning to produce unfortunate effects. Finding that his harassment of the banians had met merely with admonitions, the Shaikh increased his pressure on them. On 22 July, the banians were in fact forced, under protest, to leave Bida^c in H.M.S. Woodlark.² With them went Mirzā Abūl Qāsim, Ross's Residency Munshi, who had been treated discourteously by Shaikh Qāsim and against whom threats of violence had been made.³ This further blow to British prestige certainly did not go unnoticed on the Arab coast of the Gulf. In September 1882 it was claimed that the inhabitants of Bahrain were "at a loss to understand why Qāsim's acts should have been allowed to go on for such a long period".⁴ On 22 August, Ross reported that Shaikh Qāsim's recalcitrant attitude had come as a surprise to him.⁵ However, the fact was that, as the Residency Agent at Bahrain had noted a few weeks earlier, Shaikh Qāsim fancied that his connection with the Turks would secure him from punishment.⁶

1 Officiating Junior Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Ross, 28 April 1882, L/P & S/7/32, pp. 519-20.

2 Nesham to Captain I. MacIvor, Asst. Resident, Bushire, in charge of the Residency, 25 July 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 331.

3 Mirzā Abūl Qāsim to MacIvor, 24 July 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 321.

4 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 11 September 1882, L/P & S/7/35, pp. 450-51.

5 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 22 August 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 313.

6 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to MacIvor, 27 July 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 335.

In view of these unwelcome developments, Ross felt that he had no alternative but to recommend that "more active measures, involving the use of British gunboats, should be taken against Shaikh Q̄asim." The objective should be to secure from the Shaikh compensation for the losses which the banians had suffered, free admission to Bida^c for the traders in the future, and an apology for the treatment they and Mirzā Abūl Q̄asim had suffered. At the same time Ross warned that, in the event of action being taken to enforce these demands, the Turkish flag would be flown at Bida^c. Moreover, Ross stated that he was aware that "passing events elsewhere may involve delicate considerations" in coming to a decision on his recommendations.¹

It is important to note that at this time British relations with Turkey were going through one of their periodic sensitive stages. On 11 July 1882 there had occurred the British bombardment of Alexandria which was followed by the landing of British troops in Egypt. The summer of 1882 was not therefore the most opportune time to take yet further action which would inevitably antagonise the Sultan.² Thus, although there seemed no alternative to sanctioning Ross's proposals if British prestige in the Gulf was not to suffer dangerously, the sanction was not quick in coming. On 13 October the India Office requested the Government of India to take no action until

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 22 August 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 313.

2 Adolphus W. Moore, Asst. Sec., Political and Secret Dept. of India Office, 'Persian Gulf: Turkish Jurisdiction along the Arabian Coast', Part IV, 12 February 1884, L/P & S/18/B19, p. 8; Kenneth Bourne, The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902 (Oxford, 1970), p. 139; A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (eds.) The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, 1783-1919 (Westport, 1971), III, 174.

they received a further message from London. At the same time, they were asked what was the latest period to which naval operations could be postponed.¹ The reply was that operations could take place at any time in the cold season.² The question of action against Shaikh Q̄asim was even taken before the Cabinet for their consideration.³ The outcome was that, on 6 November, the Government of India was informed by telegram that both the India Office and the Foreign Office were prepared to sanction Ross's proposals.⁴

The Resident found that, although Shaikh Q̄asim was prepared to apologise and permit the banians to return to Bida^c, he adamantly refused to pay any compensation.⁵ On 1 December Ross himself arrived at Bida^c with H.M.S. Woodlark and H.M.S. Arab. The Turkish flag was immediately raised both on the Shaikh's house and on the Turkish-occupied premises. This, however, was of no avail. Under threat of bombardment, a sum of Rs. 8,000 was paid over by Shaikh Q̄asim as compensation for the losses which the banians had incurred.⁶ In the aftermath of this display of British force at Bida^c, a certain number of the banians returned to the town.

1 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 13 October 1882 (tel.), L/P & S/3/241, p. 499.

2 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 23 October 1882 (tel.), L/P & S/3/241, p. 501.

3 See note by Owen Tudor Burne, n.d., L/P & S/3/241, p. 605.

4 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 6 November 1882 (tel.), L/P & S/3/241, p. 128. For the sanction of the Foreign Office, see Foreign Office to India Office, 4 November 1882, No. 679, secret and immediate, L/P & S/3/241, p. 607.

5 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 29 November 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 399.

6 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 7 December 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 449; Ross to Shaikh Q̄asim, 4 December 1882, enclosure No. 3 in ibid., p. 461.

The inevitable Ottoman reaction was not long in coming. On 10 February 1883, G.H. Wyndham, the British Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople, received a note verbale from the Porte protesting at Ross's action and demanding the return of the indemnity extracted from their "Sous-Gouverneur" of Qatar, Shaikh Qāsim.¹ To this, and further Turkish protests of a similar kind, Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, formally replied on 7 May 1883. Not only were the protests rejected, but Granville also informed the Turkish authorities that their claim to "rights of sovereignty" over the Qatar coast had never been admitted by the British Government.²

The significance for the development of British policy of the Resident's coercive measures against Shaikh Qāsim in December 1882 was that the British had been forced to take a bold initiative in Qatar without reference to Turkish claims to jurisdiction. For some time both the Government of India and the Home Government had been coming to see the need for direct action in Turkish-claimed territory, in the interests both of Bahrain and of British prestige in the Gulf. December 1882 was the first occasion on which such direct action was taken. At the same time, British prestige in the Gulf had only been vindicated at the expense of the feelings of Shaikh Qāsim. In taking the action of December 1882, one British intention was to make it less likely that challenges to Shaikh ʿĪsā would be mounted from Qatar with the connivance of Shaikh Qāsim. In actuality, in the

1 Note verbale from the Sublime Porte to the British Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople, 10 February 1883, L/P & S/3/242, pp. 1161-63.

2 Granville to Musurus Pasha, Turkish Ambassador in London, 7 May 1883, L/P & S/3/243, pp. 771-63.

course of the next few years, relations between the Shaikh of Bida^c and the Āl Khalīfa were checkered.

In 1881 a certain amount of distrust had arisen between Shaikh Q̄asim and the Āl Khalīfa, because of the supposed intention of Shaikh ʿĪsā to establish the Na^cīm of Zubāra at Fuwairit, another settlement on the north-west coast of Qatar.¹ In December 1881, however, this distrust appeared to be removed after a meeting between Shaikh Q̄asim and Ahmad b. Ali, the brother of Shaikh ʿĪsā. Shaikh Ahmad landed in western Qatar with 200 followers on a sporting expedition. On his insistence, Shaikh Q̄asim went in person to greet him, thus paying him the deference due to a superior from an inferior. Moreover, Shaikh Q̄asim gave him an undertaking that he would not give aid to Nāsir b. Mubārak in the future.²

These gestures of reconciliation between Shaikh Q̄asim and the Āl Khalīfa did not prove to be of much substance. Even at the time, the Residency Agent at Bahrain did not believe that the reconciliation was cordial and sincere.³ Although in the following few years presents and friendly letters were exchanged between Shaikh Q̄asim and Shaikh ʿĪsā,

1 'Administration Report', 1880-81, p. 6.

2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 January 1882, No. 15, L/P & S/9/67, p. 25; Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 29 December 1881, No. 194, *Ibid.*, p. 26.

3 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Ross, 28 December 1881, L/P & S/9/66A, pp. 5-7.

rivalry between them in Qatar broke out once more in 1886. On 31 March Shaikh Q̄asim wrote to the Resident at Bushire complaining that Shaikh ʿIsā was interfering with the bedouin tribes of Qatar in order to cause him trouble.¹ The trouble was that Shaikh ʿIsā was encouraging one Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb in his political rivalry with Shaikh Q̄asim.

Muhammad b. ʿAbdul Wahāb was a Shaikh and pearl merchant of Qatar. He had formerly been a friend and wazīr of Shaikh Q̄asim. During the banian affair of 1881-82 it was considered by the British side that Muhammad b. ʿAbdul Wahāb was encouraging the actions of Shaikh Q̄asim.² Certainly, as a pearl trader himself, Muhammad was an enemy of the banians.³ By early 1886, however, he had begun to develop ambitions of his own in rivalry to Shaikh Q̄asim. At the instigation of Muhammad, a part of the Āl Bū ʿAinain tribe living near Bida^c migrated to Bahrain preliminary to their going to live at the settlement of al-Ghareeyat in Qatar. The Āl Bū ʿAinain had recently been under the jurisdiction of Shaikh Q̄asim.⁴ Their migration was, therefore, a challenge to his power. Moreover, the migration was brought about by Muhammad through a secret understanding

- 1 Shaikh Q̄asim to Ross, 31 March 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 936. See also Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Bushire, 6 April 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 935.
- 2 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 3 October 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 365; report of Agha Muhammad Rahīm, 22 November 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 417; Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 7 December 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 452.
- 3 Mirzā Abūl Q̄asim to Ross, 3 July 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 279; Mirzā Abūl Q̄asim to MacIvor, 24 July 1882, L/P & S/9/67, p. 322.
- 4 For previous references to the Āl Bū ʿAinain in relation to Bahrain and Qatar affairs see above, Chapter I, pp. 15, 56-58.

with Shaikh ^cIsā. Also as a result of this secret understanding, the people of the settlement of Fuwairit, on the north-eastern coast of Qatar, were induced to rebel against Shaikh Qāsim.¹ Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb then became Shaikh over the people of Fuwairit and al-Ghareeyat², much to the apprehension of Shaikh Qāsim.

Shaikh ^cIsā was not the only party involved in the rivalry between Muhammad and Shaikh Qāsim. On 22 April 1886, a news report of the Residency Agent in Bahrain revealed that Muhammad had decided to try to have Qāsim removed from his position as Ottoman qā'im-maqām of Bida^c. The Turks had never found Shaikh Qāsim an easy person to work with. In particular, he had always been firm in his opposition to the establishment of a Turkish custom post at Bida^c.³ This gave Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb the opportunity he wanted to exploit Turkish dissatisfaction with Qāsim for his own advantage. Muhammad made approaches to the mutasarrif of Hasā, Shaikh Qāsim's immediate Ottoman superior, about the advantages to the Turks of establishing a customs post at Bida^c which, Muhammad claimed, would bring the Turks large revenues. He, Muhammad, would be willing to contract for the customs, but a Turkish official should be appointed

1 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Bushire, 7 May 1886, No. 34, L/P & S/7/47, p. 1117.

2 News Report by the Residency Agent, Bahrain, 29 July 1886, L/P & S/7/48, p. 247.

3 See for example Muggoo Banian to Kokul Banian, 30 March 1883, No. 39, L/P & S/9/67.

at Bida^C and should be supported by a detachment of Turkish soldiers in place of Qāsim.¹ By May 1886 reports were being received in Bahrain that a Turkish vessel, the Murrikh, was at Bida^C and its commander was engaged in noting down information regarding the taxes which the boats and pearl divers paid to Shaikh Qāsim. The response of Shaikh Qāsim was to retreat into the interior where he was reported to be engaged in building a fort for himself.²

The conflict between Qāsim and Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb became even more acute when the Shaikh of Bida^C discovered that Muhammad had been appointed qā'im-maqām of al-Ghareeyat by the Turks. Qāsim declared that two rulers could not live in one and the same district and that if the Turks wanted him to be in control in Qatar that they must also give him authority over al-Ghareeyat. He also alleged publicly that Muhammad had bribed Turkish officials to gain his position as qā'im-maqām of al-Ghareeyat.³

Although the rivalry between Shaikh Qāsim and Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb during 1886 became very bitter, with armed clashes occurring between their supporters in the period April to July⁴, the conflict was

1 News Report by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 22 April 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 938.

2 News Report by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 6 May 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 941.

3 News Report by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 19 May 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 1118.

4 See for example News Report by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 22 April 1886, L/P & S/7/47, pp. 938-39.

eventually settled. In July, Muhammad recognised that Q̄asim was still a powerful force in Qatar and that further hostilities could only be harmful to his own interests. In particular, Shaikh Q̄asim was able to cause Muhammad financial loss by threatening al-Ghareeyat and al Fuwairit with bedouin raids whilst the inhabitants were away at the pearl fishery.¹ Muhammad therefore went to the house of Shaikh Q̄asim in Bida^c to beg for pardon and place himself once more under the Shaikh's jurisdiction.²

Shaikh ^cIsā's instigation of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb in 1886 demonstrated that, despite the gestures of reconciliation between Shaikh Q̄asim and the Āl Khalīfa in 1881-82, nothing had fundamentally changed in relations between Bahrain and Bida^c. In particular, Shaikh ^cIsā was continuing to ignore British warnings, which were repeated in the course of the events of 1886³, that he should refrain from concerning himself with the Qatar mainland.

Matters became much more complicated in the following five years, and the relationship between Bahrain and its British protectors was altered significantly. The complications were not confined merely

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- 1 News Report by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 29 June 1886, L/P & S/7/48, p. 247.
 - 2 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Bushire, 30 July 1886, No. 58, L/P & S/7/48, p. 248; News Report by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 8 August 1886, L/P & S/7/48, p. 268; Shaikh Q̄asim to Residency Agent, Bahrain, 1 August 1886, L/P & S/7/48, p. 271.
 - 3 See S.B. Miles, Officiating Resident, Bushire, to Shaikh ^cIsā, 29 April 1886, L/P & S/7/47, p. 939.

to the Qatar and Hasā coasts, but involved a series of political developments from the Persian coast to central Arabia, which seemed to threaten the Trucial System at many points. This resulted in the conclusion of new agreements with all the Trucial Shaikhs as a supplement to the traditional diplomatic and naval defences of the British position.

The problems began to arise in the summer of 1887, first with Shaikh Qāsim and the Turks, then with the Persians. Relations between Shaikh Qāsim and his Ottoman overlords were as unsatisfactory as ever, with the Shaikh wishing to have as little constraint on his affairs as possible. From the latter part of 1886 onwards reports were received in Bushire that the Shaikh wanted to be rid of the Turks completely and to secure the protection and friendship of the British Government.¹ In a new attempt at getting free, the Shaikh, alarmed at the new Turkish proposal to establish a customs house at Bida^C, withdrew to Zāyēn from his chief town, declaring that he no longer exercised any authority there. It would appear that his aim was to diminish the importance of Bida^C, in hopes that his withdrawal into the interior, a decline in commercial activity, and a general depopulation would cause the Turks to evacuate the town, thereby restoring his independence.² One method adopted to this end was an

1 Hakīm to Miles, 24 September 1886, L/P & S/7/50, p. 300; Hakīm to Ross, 12 December 1887, L/P & S/3/53, p. 396.

2 Shaikh Qāsim to Ross, 24 May 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 159, p. 123; Qāsim to Ross, 3 June 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 165, p. 126; Residency Agent to Ross, 3 June 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 166, pp. 126-27; Residency Agent to Ross, 20 June 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 164, pp. 125-26; Residency Agent to Ross, 3 July 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 184, p. 139.

attempt to drive all foreign traders, including the banians, from the port by encouraging bedouins to make attacks upon them. Shaikh Q̄asim was able to do this because, despite his abandonment of Bida^c, his influence in his capital was still paramount. Thus, in August 1887, two banians were cruelly wounded by bedouins in Bida^c.¹ Immediately afterwards, acts of piracy began off the Qatar coast, some of the victims being Bahraini vessels. At this, Shaikh ^cIsā asked Ross that he might be allowed to take punitive measures of his own.²

On this occasion, however, the British were able to deal with Shaikh Q̄asim without the use of gunboats. It was discovered that a consignment of specie and pearls worth Rs. 20,000 belonging to Shaikh Q̄asim was in Bahrain. At Ross's request, Shaikh ^cIsā agreed to place an embargo on the consignment.³ Shaikh Q̄asim, on being informed of these proceedings, had the piracy stopped and recovered the plundered property from the Banī Hājir pirates who had been responsible. Eventually, more than Rs. 6,000 was paid by him to those banians and Bahrainis who had suffered at the hands of his agents, and his sequestered property was accordingly released.⁴

Although the British had been able to bring about a satisfactory outcome to the latest difficulty with Shaikh Q̄asim without the use of gunboats, the Mutasarrif of Hasā lodged another protest about Ross's

1 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 5 August 1887 (tel.), P/3275, March 1888, No. 162, p. 124.

2 ^cIsā to Ross, 11 August 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 181, p. 136.

3 Ross to ^cIsā, 19 August 1887; ^cIsā to Ross, 19 August 1887, P/3275, March 1888, Nos. 221 and 222, p. 156.

4 ^cIsā to Ross, 27 September 1887, L/P & S/7/51, p. 1182; W.L. Morrison, Commander H.M.S. Sphinx, to Commander C.E. Gissing, Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, 29 October 1887, Adm. 127/32, p. 14.

treatment of his official (Q̄asim), reiterated Turkish claims to sovereignty over Bahrain, and threatened to appoint an agent on the island.¹ The Foreign Office and the India Office therefore agreed on a reply which rejected both the protest and the claim to sovereignty.²

At the same time, a vigorous outburst of Persian political activity accompanied the appointment of the Amin as-Sultan to the Persian governorship of the Gulf Ports.³ His representative, General Hajī Ahmad Khan, visited Abu Dhabi and Dubai in August 1887. The Resident eventually learned that Hajī Ahmad Khan had proposed that the Shaikh of Dubai accept a Persian agent in his territory. As a precaution, Ross in December obtained assurances from the six Trucial Shaikhs, stipulating that they would not correspond or enter into any agreement with any government whatever except the British Government, nor allow an agent of any other government to reside in their territory without British permission.⁴

1 Muhammad Sālīh Pasha, mutasarrif of Najd, to Shaikh C̄Isā, 18 September 1887, Adm. 127/32, pp. 14-33; Muhammad Sālīh Pasha to Shaikh C̄Isā, 30 October 1887, L/P & S/7/53, p. 392.

2 Foreign Office to India Office, 17 April 1888; India Office to Foreign Office, 18 April 1888, L/P & S/3/287, pp. 1351-53.

3 In an unrelated episode in 1886, the Shah had unexpectedly raised the subject of the Persian claim to Bahrain, based on the 1869 exchange of letters with Lord Clarendon. The Foreign Office determined to resist any arguments, but the matter was not pressed by the Persians. See Nicolson to Iddesleigh, 22 December 1886, L/P & S/3/279, p. 1339, and previous correspondence, L/P & S/3/276, pp. 95-103, 361, & 1426; L/P & S/3/278, pp. 409-15. For an account of the imposition of Persian authority over the Arabs at Lingah and the Persian occupation of Sirri Island as a background to the visits to the Trucial Coast, see Muhammad Morsy Abdullah, The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History (London, 1978), pp. 24-25, 229-31, & 238-43.

4 'Intrigues of Persian Officials on the Arab Coast, 1888-94', R/15/1/188. Memorandum by Captain Ravenshaw, R.I.M.S. Lawrence, 27 August 1887, P/3275, March 1888, No. 229, p. 161; Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 January 1888, and enclosures, P/3276, August 1888, Nos. 611-17, pp. 356-57.

In February 1888 Hajī Ahmad Khan returned to the Arab coast with the Governor of Qishm Island and an armed escort. Reports reached British officials that one of his objects was to secure a site for a Russian naval station, which would help Persia assert its position in a struggle against the British. At Rās Mussandam and Umm Āl-Qaiwain he failed to convince the inhabitants to accept the Persian flag. Rumours from Persian ports at the same time suggested that another Persian official, Malik al-Tujar, was collecting troops in the Persian government steamer Persepolis for an attack on Bahrain. Disappointed by his reception on the western shores of the Gulf, Hajī Ahmad Khan returned to Bandar Abbas. The Persian Government subsequently disavowed the proceedings of both men, and the British attributed their actions to a scheme by the Amin as-Sultan.¹

The British were nonetheless extremely suspicious of the intent behind Turkish and Persian activities. By January 1888 it was felt necessary to back up diplomatic warnings with a show of naval force. British complaints about the increase of piracy near areas under Turkish jurisdiction in Hasā and Qatar had produced one undesirable effect: Turkish officials soon saw in them a convenient justification for strengthening the Turkish presence on the Arab coast. To Consul Robertson at Basra, the remarks of the Mutasarrif of Hasā about Bahrain being a Turkish possession were a symptom of a general

¹ Commander Gissing, H.M.S. Osprey, to Rear-Admiral Richards, Naval Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, 19 March 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 261, pp. 178-82; Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 6 February 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 485, p. 271. Nicolson to Foreign Office, 22 February 1888 (tel.), and Viceroy to India Office, 23 February 1888 (tel.), L/P & S/3/286, pp. 1451 & 1473. Sir H.D. Wolff to Salisbury, 12 May 1888; Amin-es-Sultan to Malik-et-Toojar, 28 December 1887 & 26 January 1888, L/P & S/3/288, pp. 1383-89.

intention to increase Turkish influence throughout the Gulf. When discussing the inefficiency of Turkish naval forces, he observed that "any increase in Turkish naval power in these waters, which might result from pressure in connection with robberies of boats off the Katif coast, would be almost more undesirable than the robberies themselves, ..."¹ Robertson suspected that the visit of Nāfiz Pasha, the wālī of Basra, to Hasā in February would have among its purposes the furtherance of Turkish claims to Bahrain, possibly by means of a landing by him and his retinue.² So seriously was this possible threat taken that two gunboats were despatched to Bahrain with instructions to resist by force any attempt at a landing by the Turks.³ While the wālī was on the Hasā coast, Ross became worried about the movements of the Persian vessel Persepolis and Hajī Ahmad Khan's second journey. He sent one of the gunboats at Bahrain to visit the Trucial Coast, but informed his superiors that he had ordered the other to "prevent any hostile attempt to land at Bahrain by Arabs, Persians, or Turks".⁴ On the arrival off Bahrain on February 19 of the Zohaff flying the flag of the wālī of Basra, H.M.S. Ranger closed

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- 1 P.J.C. Robertson, to Political Resident, Turkish Arabia, 6 December 1887, P/3276, August 1888, No. 440, p. 205.
 - 2 Robertson to Ross, 12 January 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 620, pp. 358-59; Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 12 January 1888 (tel.), P/3276, August 1888, No. 605, p. 354.
 - 3 Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 10 January 1888 (tel.), P/3276, August 1888, No. 597, p. 349; Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 17 January 1888 (tel.), P/3276, August 1888, No. 606, p. 354; India Office to Foreign Office, 18 January 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 624, p. 360; Foreign Office to India Office, 26 January 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 663, p. 378.
 - 4 Gissing to Richards, 19 March 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 261, pp. 178-82, quoting Ross's orders of 8 and 15 February. The mention of Arabs in the orders was probably a reference to a threat made in December 1887 by Nāsir b. Mubārak to enter Bahrain: Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 February 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 627, p. 360.

with her and her commander was informed that Bahrain was under British protection. The following day the Turkish corvette departed for Bida^c without having advanced Turkish claims to the Shaikhdom in any way.¹

Upon his return to Basra, Nāfiz Pasha did however order reinforcements to the Hasā coast, and despatched supplies of coal to Rās Tanura and Bida^c for the first time. In the interval between the wālī's tour and June 1888 it was also reported that the Turkish authorities of Hasā intended rebuilding Zubāra and establishing a military post there. It was feared that Nāsir b. Mubārak and Shaikh Qāsīm would be chosen as the agents for this purpose. The Government of India therefore instructed Ross to inform both Nāsir and his father-in-law, that a settlement at Zubāra would not be permitted. In the event, no actual attempt to re-occupy the site was made.²

At this time a major influence upon the conduct of the internal and external affairs of Bahrain was removed from the scene. The death in October 1888 of Shaikh Ahmad b. Ali, one of the ruler's brothers, had a significant effect upon the character of Āl Khalīfa rule. Shaikh ^cIsā was a very different personality from the active and vigorous Ahmad, upon whom he had relied greatly in governing the islands. The Residency Agent described their relationship, and the

1 Commander Johnson, H.M.S. Ranger, to Ross, 23 February 1889, P/3276, August 1888, No. 656, p. 371.

2 News reports by Residency Agent, Bahrain, 6 and 28 March 1888, P/3276, August 1888, Nos. 495 & 502, pp. 374 & 277; Residency Agent to Ross, 27 June 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 107, p. 59; ^cIsā to Residency Agent, 28 June 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 108, p. 60; Robertson to Political Resident, Turkish Arabia, 12 March 1888, P/3276, August 1888, No. 669, p. 380.

impact of Ahmad's death:¹

As regards your enquiry as to whether this event will weaken or strengthen the power of Shaikh Esau in external and internal affairs, I beg to say that Shaikh Esau's power will be weakened in every way, because Shaikh Ahmed was of great help to Shaikh Esau, in giving his counsel and views in all matters, whether internal or foreign, and he was in fact Shaikh Esau's sword. The two brothers were loyal and sincere to each other. People used to fear, in secret, Shaikh Ahmed, particularly so all their other brothers and relatives, and Shaikh Ahmed was a strong support to Shaikh Esau. Shaikh Esau is now single-handed, and he feels very much the loss of Shaikh Ahmed; and there is no one who can take the place of Shaikh Ahmed. After the death of Shaikh Ahmed I visited Shaikh Esau on two or three occasions, and I found that his thoughts were unsettled, because he is now left alone; ... Shaikh Esau is very slow in conducting affairs and carrying out matters.

From 1888 to 1890 Shaikh Q̄asim's attention was occupied to the south, as the long-standing dispute with Shaikh Zaid b. Khalīfa of Abu Dhabi over ^cUdaid broke out into open warfare.² British concern for the stability of the whole region grew as Q̄asim tried to enlist allies, and technically violated the maritime truce on a few occasions. Shaikh Q̄asim sought support from the Ottomans while still trying to evade their direct control, which thus practically confined their assistance to the defence of Bida^c. He urged several of the Trucial Shaikhs to assist his raids against Abu Dhabi. Finally, he caused great uneasiness in Muscat and Trucial Oman by suggesting that the new conqueror of Najd, Muhammad b. Rashīd of Shammar, would come from

1 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, 10 November 1888, P/3501, January 1889, No. 23, pp. 25-27. See also Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D. 12 March 1899, P/5724, May 1899, p. 49; Arabic biographical sketch of Ahmad (1883) in R/15/1/186; Lorimer, IB, 912.

2 See Residency files 'Hostilities between the Shaikh of Qatar and the Shaikh of Abu Dhabi', R/15/1/189, and 'Threatened Invasion of Oman by Ibn Rashid', R/15/1/190; Abdullah, op. cit., pp. 164-68.

central Arabia with a large expedition, which would subjugate all the territories previously claimed by the Āl-Sa^cūd. Bahrain was not directly involved in these developments, only providing a refuge for Na^cīm and other tribesmen of Abū Duluf and Ruwais in norther Qatar, who crossed over to the island to avoid being moved southwards to fight for Shaikh Qāsim.¹ The British on the other hand were extremely concerned that none of the Shaikh of Bida^c's schemes should succeed, because all of them seemed inevitably to involve the extension of Turkish influence and jurisdiction into Trucial Oman.²

The next alarm over Zubāra fitted into what seemed to be a more ambitious programme of increased Turkish activity in the area generally. In May 1890 Shaikh Īsā received reports that the new mutasarrif of Hasā, Ākif Pasha, intended to order Shaikh Qāsim to rebuild both Zubāra and Ādaid; to appoint mudīrs to both places, and four deputies to Shaikh Qāsim in Bida^c because of his continued neglect of affairs; to raise a camel patrol force in Hasā; and to attempt once again to establish a coal depôt at Bahrain. Muhammad b. Abdul Wahāb declined the offer of Zubāra, but in September it was reported that a person by the name of Āsif Beg had been nominated at Basra as mudīr of Zubāra. On this occasion, Shaikh Qāsim, suspicious of the intentions of his Ottoman nominal overlords, came out in opposition to

1 Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, 2 April 1890, P/3739, May 1890, No. 126, p. 107.

2 See for example, Ross to Govt. of India, F.D., 19 June 1888, L/P & S/7/54, pp. 347-49; India Office to Foreign Office, 12 July 1888, L/P & S/3/289, p. 413; Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D. 23 August 1888, L/P & S/7/56, p. 397; India Office to Foreign Office, 3 July 1889, L/P & S/3/296, p. 491.

this project. Moreover, ^CĀkif Pasha's measures were disliked in Hasā for their haste and expense. Towards the end of 1890, the mutasarrif was compelled by ill-health to leave Hasā and in fact died soon after. As a result, ^CĀsif Beg seems never to have taken up his post of mudīr of Zubāra.¹

Developments on the Trucial Coast involving another European power led to the closure of the remaining gap in the formal basis of the British system of protection in the Gulf, and brought the status of the other Trucial Shaikhdoms into line with that of Bahrain. In September 1891 the Residency Agent at Lingah noted that one of two suspected French agents then on the Trucial Coast had been granted a piece of land by the Shaikh of Umm al-Qaiwain. The Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel A.C. Talbot, noted that the engagements taken by Ross in December 1887 did not quite cover such a situation, nor had the Government of India specifically indicated that they considered the agreements as formally binding. In order to forestall possible French intrigues, he recommended concluding fresh agreements, with an added "no alienation" clause similar to the one signed by the Sultan of Muscat earlier in the year. The final "Exclusive Agreements" were signed in early March 1892. They reiterated the pledges not to enter into agreements or correspondence with foreign powers other than the British Government, nor to allow agents of other governments

1 'Administration Report', 1890-91, p. 7. Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 18 and 26 May 1890; Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, 14, 18 and 22 May 1890, P/3739, June 1890, Nos. 242-46, pp. 23-32. Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, 5 and 18 June 1890, P/3739, August 1890, Nos. 82 and 88, pp. 111 & 279. Residency Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, 3 December 1890, P/3963, January 1891, No. 94, p. 71.

to reside in their territories without British permission. They undertook further not to cede, sell, mortgage, or otherwise give for occupation any part of their territories, except to the British Government.¹

The 1880 agreement with Bahrain contained no provisions regarding disposal of territory, so Talbot went to Bahrain to complete the series of documents. Talbot offered Shaikh ^CṬisā a declaration in a single article, but the Shaikh preferred a three-article form identical to the agreements which the other six shaikhs had signed.² Interestingly, the 1880 agreement referred to not "entering into negotiations or making treaties of any sort with any State or Government other than the British" without the previous consent of the British Government, and permitted friendly correspondence with local rulers on matters of minor importance. The 1892 agreements prohibited all correspondence with other powers on any account.

The period since 1880 had been one in which the alliance between the enemies of Shaikh ^CṬisā had been riven with dissension. Even so, the antagonism between Shaikh Qasim and the Turks had not prevented the mounting of challenges to the rule of the Shaikh of Bahrain and his British protectors. Indeed, the latter had shown some signs of

1 Talbot to H.M. Durand, Indian Foreign Secretary, 29 September 1891, R/15/1/191, 'Agreements with Trucial Shaikhs and Bahrain'. 'Exclusive Agreement of the Chief of Abu Dhabi with the British Government, dated the 6th March 1892' and 'Exclusive Agreement of the Shaikh of Bahrain with the British Government, dated the 13th March 1892', Aitchison, XI, 238 & 256-57. Briton Cooper Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1892-1914 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 24. J.B. Kelly, 'The Legal and Historical Basis of the British Position in the Persian Gulf', St. Anthony's Papers, No. 4, 1958, p. 134.

2 Talbot to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 15 March 1892, R/15/1/191.

recognising the need to act with more decision to safeguard what the Āl Khalīfa considered to be their own interests. The most important formal outcome had been the signing of the Exclusive Agreement of March 1892. It was considered by the British authorities that the protection of Britain over Bahrain was now, as a result of this agreement, formally declared. On 11 November 1892, the Porte was informed in a note verbale that, "Bahrein being now under the protection of Her Majesty the Queen of England ... no interference by the Ottoman authorities with the natives of that island can be admitted".¹

However, neither Shaikh Qāsim, nor the Āl ʿAbdallah, nor even the Turks, were likely to cease their plottings against Shaikh ʿIsā in the face of a merely formal demonstration like the Exclusive Agreement of 1892. In August 1892, within a few months of the signing of the agreement, reports reached Bahrain that Shaikh Qāsim and Nāsir b. Mubārak were collecting forces in northern Qatar for yet another attempt at invading the island.² The alarm became so great that the banians of Bahrain loaded their property into boats in Manāma harbour in readiness for flight.³ Letters of warning were sent both to Qāsim and Nāsir, and an undertaking was obtained from the Turkish authorities at Basra that they would instruct their local authorities to prevent any invasion of Bahrain from the mainland.⁴ In the event, this latest attempt on Bahrain, if indeed that is what was intended, came to nothing.

1 Note verbale of 11 November 1892 from Clare Ford, British Ambassador, Constantinople, to Porte, L/P & S/3/321, pp. 337-38.

2 Residency Agent, Bahrain to Talbot, 1 August 1892, P/4185, October 1892, No. 118, p. 130.

3 Talbot to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 21 August 1892, P/4185, October 1892, No. 125, p. 132.

4 Acting wālī of Basra to British Consul, Basra, 13 August 1892, P/4185, October 1892, No. 129, p. 133.

In October 1892, the wālī of Basra arrived at Qatīf and, for reasons unknown, arrested the qā'im maqām. His successor began to press Turkish claims in the area more vigorously. In November 1892, Talbot was so concerned about a possible coup de main by Turkish forces in Hasā against Bahrain that he had a British gunboat sent to the island as a precaution.¹ The Resident's instructions, that any attempted Turkish landing on Bahrain should be resisted, were approved by his superiors in India and London.²

Although this latest Turkish threat to Bahrain did not in fact materialise, in January 1893, the new qā'im-maqām ordered it to be proclaimed that Bahrain and Oman had 'reverted' to Ottoman jurisdiction. Bahraini vessels at Qatīf were ordered to fly the Turkish flag.³ A few months later, in August 1893, the qā'im-maqām of Qatīf once more had notices posted up in the bazaar there asserting Turkish sovereignty over Bahrain.⁴ British representations to the Porte resulted in professions, in November and December 1893, that orders had been issued for the withdrawal of the notification.⁵

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- 1 Talbot to H.H. Dyke, Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf Division, Commanding H.M.S. Sphinx, 30 November 1892, L/P & S/3/323, p. 69.
 - 2 Viceroy to India Office, 6 December 1892 (tel.), L/P & S/3/321, p. 393; India Office to Foreign Office, 8 December 1892, L/P & S/3/321, pp. 391-92; Foreign Office to India Office, 13 December 1892, L/P & S/3/321, pp. 551-52.
 - 3 Govt. of India to Sec. of State for India, 14 January 1893, L/P & S/7/69, p. 1133.
 - 4 Translation of proclamation made by qā'im-maqām of Qatīf, 20 August 1893, L/P & S/7/72, p. 209; news report received through an agent of the Residency, Bushire, 10 September 1893, L/P & S/7/22.
 - 5 Ford to Foreign Office, 25 November 1893, No. 547, L/P & S/3/332, p. 897; Sir A. Nicolson, British Chargé d'Affaires, Constantinople to Foreign Office, 10 December 1893, No. 573, L/P & S/3/332, pp. 1173-76; Nicolson to Foreign Office, 26 December 1893, No. 568, L/P & S/3/332, pp. 487-89.

The various mainland adversaries of the Āl Khalīfa had many other matters to occupy their attention - indeed in March 1893 Turkish troops fought and lost a battle against Qāsim, who then blockaded Bida^C. Local hostility towards Bahrain might therefore have remained in the form of verbal threats and petty annoyances, had not a new factor suddenly been added in 1895. Twenty-five years of plotting against Shaikh ^CĪsā now reached a climax with the unexpected migration of an alienated Bahrain tribe to Qatar.¹ This incident was the result of a quarrel which had arisen in March between Shaikh ^CĪsā and the Āl b. Ali owing to an act of violence which had been committed by Shaikh ^CĪsā's brother, and an affray which took place two days later, in which four men were killed. Shaikh Sultān b. Salāma, leader of the Āl b. Ali since 1893, removed his tribe to Ruwais in northern Qatar. He soon entered into close relations with Shaikh Qāsim, who made a show of trying to reconcile Shaikh Sultān and Shaikh ^CĪsā. These efforts failed, no doubt partly because they were never intended to succeed. At this point the Shaikh of Bida^C took his opportunity and invited the Āl b. Ali to establish a settlement at Zubāra.²

The Resident at Bushire, Colonel F.A. Wilson, shared Shaikh ^CĪsā's alarm at this development. A successful settlement would now be a menace in several ways:³

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- 1 The principal source for the "Zubāra Incident" in the Residency file 'Zubara Affairs, April-September 1895', R/15/1/314.
 - 2 Wilson to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 May 1895, No. 42, R/15/1/314. For the earlier history of the Āl b. Ali see Chapter I, pp. 15, 24, 56-58
 - 3 Ibid., para. 7.

Bahrein trade has increased, and to this fact may probably be attributed the movement with regard to Zobarah, which now threatens to assume more importance. A settlement there fostered by Jasim's machinations, with possibly higher support, is regarded by Sheikh Esa as fatal to the well-being of Bahrein. It would, I consider, lead to grave complications, besides furnishing a base for actual aggression. The Albin-Ali who have gone there are said to number some 1,500, including women and children; and should success be permitted to attend their movement, it is to be feared that the Naeem, Chaban and Dawasir tribes might be seduced from their allegiance to Bahrein and be led to abandon it and join the seceders to its entire ruin.

Shaikh Sultān b. Salāma rapidly became too entangled in Shaikh Qāsim's arrangements to consider returning to Bahrain, even when faced with orders and warnings delivered by Residency staff, that the settlement could not be allowed to consolidate, and that Āl b. Ali boats might be seized during the pearling season. The Ottoman mutasarraf of Hasā, Ibrāhīm Fawzī Pasha, visited Shaikh Qāsim at Zubāra for a week in May. He then sent the mudīr of ^cUqair to Zubāra with soldiers and masons, and summoned Nāsir b. Mubārak and his Banī Hājir tribesmen to camp nearby.¹

The Government of India endorsed Wilson's suggestion of seizing the Āl b. Ali's boats if the tribe refused to abandon Zubāra, even though this now involved the risk of raising once again the question of Turkish jurisdiction in Qatar. The India Office and the Foreign Office authorised the action after allowing time for warning the

¹ Wilson to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 11, 18 and 24 May 1895, Nos. 44, 46 & 52, R/15/1/314. Ibrāhīm Fawzī Pasha was, apparently, not supported by his immediate superior in Basra, though the Turkish authorities in Baghdad were encouraging the venture: Captain J.S. Whyte, Asst. Political Agent, Basra, to Ambassador, Constantinople, 1 June 1896, L/P & S/7/87, p. 136.

Turkish Government in Constantinople.¹ Ignoring the mudīr's assertion that Zubāra was under Turkish protection, Commander J.H. Pelly of H.M.S. Sphinx on 8 and 15 July seized a total of sixteen Āl b. Ali boats and towed them to Bahrain. The Turks reacted by detaining some Bahrain boats sent to Zubāra to bring off the family of one of the shaikhs of the Āl b. Ali, who had been captured by the Sphinx, and who became reconciled with Shaikh ^ḥIsā. The Turkish warship Zohaff arrived off Zubāra at the end of July. Shaikh Qāsim was reported to be gathering tribesmen and calling in Qatar boats from the pearl banks. The local Turkish authorities openly threatened to overthrow Āl Khalīfa rule in Bahrain, possibly adding their own forces to a Qatar fleet. Pelly believed that there was a serious possibility of attack, requested naval and possibly military reinforcements, and noted that certain waters between Bahrain and Qatar were unsurveyed, so that warships could not follow native craft there. The Resident was much less convinced of the probability of an attack, partly because the Ottoman Government could be held fully responsible for it after the warning which they had received.²

Wilson soon recognised, however, that Shaikh Qāsim's active intrigues could cause an outbreak in Bahrain itself, and the irresponsible local Turkish officials would not restrain him. On

1 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 15 May 1895 (tel.); India Office to Foreign Office, 22 May 1895; Foreign Office to India Office, 31 May 1895; Foreign Secretary, Simla, to Resident, 3 July 1895 (tel.), R/15/1/314.

2 Pelly to Wilson, 14, 17, 23 and 30 July, 6 and 14 August 1895; Mudīr of ^ḥUqair to Pelly, 26 July 1895; Wilson to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 27 July, 3 and 10 August 1895, Nos. 75, 77 & 81, R/15/1/314.

16 August the Resident warned the Government of India of the increasingly menacing situation which Bahrain faced. He informed them that Commander Pelly had asked if he should open fire on meeting any apparently hostile fleet under Turkish colours either inside or outside Bahrain's territorial waters. He, the Resident, urged that "stronger action" than that already taken was now required. The Government of India proposed to instruct him that any demonstration against Bahrain should be resisted by gunfire if Commander Pelly was satisfied that the advancing fleet was hostile. If the fleet flew the Turkish flag then an explanation should be demanded and, if this was not satisfactory, a warning should be given that advance within Bahrain's three-mile limit would be resisted by force. Authorisation was telegraphed to Wilson on 22 August.¹

The mutasarrif of Hasā increased the tension by declaring on 19 August that he could no longer restrain the tribes of Qatar, who had been provoked by British aggressions. Continued detention of Āl b. Ali boats would result in an attack on Bahrain at the end of seventeen days.² On the last day of this ultimatum Commander Pelly at Bahrain received word that an attack was imminent and that the Turks might participate. Upon arriving at Zubāra on 6 September, he found a fleet of boats in the harbour, apparently armed in readiness for a raid on Bahrain. On his own responsibility he therefore ordered the two

1 Resident to Foreign Secretary, Simla, 16 August 1895 (tel.); Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 18 August 1895 (tel.); Foreign Secretary, Simla, to Resident, 22 August 1895 (tel.), R/15/1/314.

2 Resident to Foreign Secretary, Simla, 26 August 1895 (tel.), R/15/1/314.

British warships under his command to bombard the invasion fleet. Forty-four boats were estimated to have been destroyed by shelling or burning. Shaikh Q̄asim offered to surrender, at the same time begging for pardon. The British laid down terms that, before this submission by Shaikh Q̄asim could be accepted, the Āl b. Ali should evacuate Zubāra, return to Bahrain and place themselves once more under Shaikh C̄īsā's authority. Shaikh Q̄asim was obliged to accept by the seizure of 120 of the remaining boats.¹ The Āl b. Ali returned as a body to Bahrain, resuming their residence there under Shaikh C̄īsā's assurance of the maintenance of the conditions they had formerly enjoyed.² Zubāra was abandoned by the Turks.³

Commander Pelly's action received the approval of the Resident, the Government of India and the authorities in London.⁴ The Government of India also instructed the Resident, Colonel Wilson, to demand a fine of Rs. 30,000 from Shaikh Q̄asim as punishment for being

1 Pelly to Wilson, 7 September 1895, R/15/1/314; Pelly to Drummond, 12 September 1895 (tel.), L/P & S/3/348, p. 1009; Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 14 September 1895, L/P & S/3/348, pp. 429-32.

2 Wilson to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 28 September 1895, No. 103, R/15/1/314. Shaikh Sultān b. Salāma was permitted not to return with the others. He was murdered off Rās Tannura in November by members of the Amāmirah tribe of Bahrain. See 'Administration Report', 1895-96, p. 4.

3 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 11 March 1896, No. 44, L/P & S/7/85, p. 136.

4 Wilson to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 15 September 1895, No. 98, R/15/1/314; Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 11 March 1896, No. 44, L/P & S/7/85, p. 136; India Office to Foreign Office, 15 April 1896, L/P & S/3/351, pp. 1195-96; Foreign Office to India Office, 28 April 1896, L/P & S/3/352, p. 761.

the main instigator of the disturbances. If Q̄asim failed to pay, the boats captured at Zubāra would be destroyed.¹ In the event, the Shaikh refused to pay and most² of the boats were burnt on 6 April 1896 as they lay off Bahrain.³

This decisive British action in ending the Zubāra crisis of 1895, involving spectacular naval action against the forces of an ostensible Turkish qā'im-maqām, was a turning point in British relations with Bahrain. Ever since the earliest period of the rule of Shaikh ^cIsā in Bahrain, when Turkish power was first established on the nearby mainland, British action in protection of the Shaikhdom had been hampered by diplomatic considerations. Appeasement of the Turks had led to a serious undermining of the confidence of the confidence of the Āl Khalīfa in their protectors. By 1878-79 Anglo-Bahraini relations had reached a low ebb with the destruction of Zubāra and British failure to take effective action against an outbreak of piracy against Bahraini commerce organised from Turkish-claimed territory. The situation had only begun to improve in 1879, after Ross's letter to the Government of India in January of that year⁴ had, apparently, forced a reconsideration of British policy towards the Turks in the area of the Arab coast of the Gulf. This new departure in British

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Wilson, 10 January 1896, No. 68-E, L/P & S/7/85, p. 13.

2 A number were returned to certain tribes of Qatar after their head men had paid ransoms. See Commander R.H. Story, Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf to Resident, Bushire, 1 April 1896, No. 24, L/P & S/7/87, p. 331.

3 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 30 June 1896, No. 124, L/P & S/7/87, p. 331.

4 See Chapter 2, pp. 108-9.

policy had resulted in the ratification of the first Exclusive Agreement with the Shaikh of Bahrain after Ross had once more taken the initiative in securing Shaikh ^CIsā's signature to the engagement in December 1880.

From the time of the signing of this Agreement, the British showed greater decisiveness than in 1878-79 in taking action to protect Bahrain. By the summer of 1882, the consequences of failing to curb directly the excesses of Shaikh Qāsim against British Indian subjects were threatening to prove disastrous to British interests. In particular, it had become necessary to demonstrate that it was the protection of the British, not that of the Ottomans, which was decisive for the well-being of the rulers of the Arab side of the Gulf. This issue had been in doubt ever since the Ottoman invasion of Hasā in 1871 had resulted in talk in the area to the effect that it was the Turks who were now all-powerful there and it would be wise to make terms with them.¹ Against this background, the show of naval force before the 'Turkish' port of Bida^C in December 1882 provided a convincing demonstration of British determination that Turkish pretensions would not be allowed to interfere with the safeguarding of the interests of those whom the British Government had an obligation to protect.

This demonstration, was meant, at least by Ross, to be a declaration of British intentions to act decisively to protect not only the banians but also Bahrain. The new British resolve to warn

1 See Chapter 2, p.76.

off those who coveted the Shaikhdom blended a few years later with a general concern to reinforce the British position on the Arab side of the Gulf. Apprehensions about the significance for the Trucial System of various Turkish, Arab, Persian, and French activities between 1887 and 1892 led to the establishment of closer formal relations between Britain, Bahrain and the shaikhdoms of the Trucial Coast. In 1895 the tangled political affairs of Bahrain and Qatar produced a crisis which conclusively showed the extent of British willingness to employ force to back up their agreements. In 1878, at the time of the destruction of Zubāra, the British had seemed willing to contemplate the recognition of Turkish sovereignty on the west coast of Qatar. It was a measure of how far British policy had changed in the intervening seventeen years that no objection at any official level was raised when, in 1895, a hostile fleet incited by Turkish officials was blown to pieces in Zubāra harbour by British gunboats. Moreover, although the statement of the Government of India of September 1873 that Shaikh ^ḤIsā had no possessions in Qatar was not over-ruled, the Turks were also, in the aftermath of the 1895 Zubāra crisis, told once more that the British Government was not prepared to recognise Ottoman claims to "the portion of the coast of the Persian Gulf in which Zobara is situated".¹

The signing of the final Exclusive Agreement of March 1892 and the decisive action of September 1895 in defence of Bahrain may be seen

¹ Lord Salisbury, Foreign Secretary to Anthopoulos Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador, London, late November 1896, draft submitted to India Office for approval (which was given), Register No. 887, L/P & S/3/355, p. 755.

as the culmination of the tendency of British policy towards bold action in defence of the Shaikhdom, a tendency which had been evident ever since 1879. With the aftermath of the Zubāra crisis in 1896, however, there began a new stage in Anglo-Bahraini relations. Between 1871 and 1896 these relations had been very strongly affected by the presence on the Arabian coast of the Gulf of one Power of world importance - Turkey. From around 1896 other world Powers were beginning to increase their presence in the area.

CHAPTER 4

BAHRAIN AND EUROPEAN RIVALRY IN THE GULF: 1896-1904

From the time of the Zubāra incident onwards Turkish designs on Bahrain ceased to cause the same degree of concern as in the period from 1871 to 1895. Apart from minor annoyances over matters such as quarantine, or further rumours about mudirs in Qatar, the only troublesome issue was the denial by Turkish officials of the right of British consular officers to protect Bahrainis travelling or residing in Ottoman territory. On many occasions¹ after 1895 British representations on behalf of aggrieved Bahrainis came to nothing.²

From the mid-1890s onwards, the British had to give increasing attention to the possible threat to their whole position in the Gulf arising from the growing interest shown in the area by other European powers. Russia and France were at first viewed with most suspicion.

The Russian Tsars had been extending their territories towards Persia and the Gulf ever since the sixteenth century.³ This advance accelerated during the nineteenth century with large territorial acquisitions in Transcaucasia and Central Asia. By 1884 only

1 See Saldanha, 'Precis of Bahrein Affairs', pp. 89-92.

2 See note by Salisbury headed 'Attack on Bahrein vessel by alleged Turkish subjects. Proposed representation to wali of Basra. Question of British protection of Bahreinese', n.d., but sometime in May 1900, L/P & S/3/376.

3 Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914 (New Haven and London, 1968), p. 4.

Afghanistan and the rickety Persian Empire separated Russia from India and the Gulf.¹ The British were concerned that the objectives of this Russian advance were access to the warm-water ports of the Gulf and pressure on the Indian Empire.

French interest was partly commercial and partly connected with a wish to strengthen France's imperial interests in the Indian Ocean.² In 1862 France had become, with Britain, a co-guarantor of the independence of Oman³, and thereby took an important step towards establishing an interest at the entrance to the Gulf. In the late 1880s, British concern about French designs in this area was one of the reasons for the signing of the Exclusive Agreements of 1892 between the British Government and the rulers of the Trucial Coast.⁴ Two years later France established a Vice Consulate at Muscat and there began a particularly intense period of imperial rivalry with the British in the Gulf.⁵

British concern was intensified by the knowledge that, during this period, these two world wide rivals of Britain were moving steadily towards an entente.⁶ Indeed, in the winter of 1893-94, the Dual

1 Rose Louise Greaves, Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892 (London, 1959), p. 3.

2 Landen, op. cit., pp. 242-3.

3 See 'Declaration respecting the Independence of Muscat and Zanzibar, 1862', item No. X, Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 304-05.

4 See Chapter 3, p. 150, and also Landen, op. cit., p. 220.

5 Landen, op. cit., p. 243. For British suspicions of French activity in the Oman area at this time see for example Colonel F.A. Wilson, Resident, Bushire to Officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 26 April 1896, L/P & S/7/87.

6 A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (eds.), op. cit., III, 245.

Alliance between the French and the Russians was formally launched.¹ Britain's naval strength was great enough in the first half of the 1890s to rival any single power. However, a combination of such rivals might prove too much, with fatal results in an area like the Gulf, where British power was based on a local predominance of naval force.²

Of course, Britain's position at Bahrain was more secure, in the face of the challenges of Russia and France, than it was in either Persia or Oman. Russian power was already a reality in northern Persia. In Oman the French could point to the joint declaration of 1862 as a legal basis for their interest in the area. Even so, the Shaikhdom was not unaffected by the developing interest of European powers in other parts of the Gulf area, and Britain's corresponding increase in its own hold. There could not be entirely separate British policies for the different parts of the Gulf: "for security the whole had to be controlled".³

In this context, attention turned to the question of the adequacy of British representation in Bahrain. The issue was first raised by Major Malcolm John Meade, who had replaced Colonel Wilson as Resident in June 1897. On 2 October Meade reported that, when he took charge of the Residency, Wilson had told him that Bahrain affairs "were not altogether in a satisfactory state" and that Shaikh ^{C=}Isā was being

1 Greaves, op. cit., p. 2.

2 Landen, op. cit., p. 245.

3 Busch, op. cit., p. 385.

"badly advised by those who wished to extend Turkish influence along the Arab coast".¹ At the same time, there were many signs that British representation at Manāma was unsatisfactory.

Up to 1879, the First Assistant Resident in the Gulf, an Englishman, had resided part of the year in Bahrain. However, after a reduction in Residency staff in 1879², the Shaikh and his people saw the Resident, or his Assistant, only occasionally. The only resident British representative in Bahrain after 1879 was a low-ranking 'Native Agent'. In 1897 this Agent was an Ottoman subject³ of Persian origin called Agha Muḥammad Raḥīm Ṣaffār. On the basis of the reports he received from Bahrain, including those of Raḥīm himself, Meade quickly came to the conclusion that the position of Britain's Agent in the Shaikhdom was "not a proper or satisfactory one".⁴ Raḥīm's reports showed that he and Shaikh Ḥīsā were not on good terms. Raḥīm himself had admitted that he had been unable to secure justice for British subjects involved in disputes in the Shaikhdom. Moreover, the Agent was not at all popular with the British Indian traders of Bahrain. In September 1897 a number of these banians had visited Bushire to

- 1 Meade to Cuningham, 2 October 1897 (demi-official, confidential), register 711-12, L/P & S/7/104. Wilson had, in fact, warned Shaikh Ḥīsā, in a valedictory message to him on 5 June 1897, not to listen to "ill advisers" but to conform to the views of the Government of India. See Wilson to Shaikh Ḥīsā, 5 June 1897, R/15/1/315. The influence of such advisers had of course increased since the death of Shaikh Ahmad in 1888, noted above, pp. 147-48.
- 2 For details of this reduction see Ross to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 14 June 1879, No. 209, L/P & S/7/31, p. 639; Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 24 September 1899, No. 128, L/P & S/7/134.
- 3 'Colonel Meade's Instructions [to his Solicitors]', enclosure No. 2 in Meade to India Office, 22 August 1900, L/P & S/3/378.
- 4 Meade to Cuningham, 2 October 1897, L/P & S/7/104, register 711-12.

complain that Rahīm was abusing his position as Agent to advance his own interests. Rahīm was, in fact, himself a big trader in Bahrain. A firm of Hindu traders who were farming the Customs of Bahrain from Shaikh ^CIsā complained that Rahīm would only give three per cent ad valorem on the goods he imported, instead of the four per cent paid by other merchants. Moreover, the banians alleged, Rahīm had extended this privilege to certain firms, both European and Native, in which he was interested, thereby causing loss to the Customs. When confronted with these allegations, Rahīm practically admitted their correctness, but had claimed that Shaikh ^CIsā had given him the right to import his goods at three per cent and to extend the privilege to anyone he wished.¹

It seemed clear to Meade that Rahīm merely regarded his position as Agent as a convenience for advancing his own private interests. For his official duties he received a mere Rs. 100 per month, whereas he obtained a far larger income from his commercial ventures. In view of this, Meade thought that Rahīm had better be retired. The problem would then be with whom to replace him. One of the clerks at the Residency could be sent as a newswriter, but would not possess the considerable standing which Rahīm commanded in Bahrain and Britain would thereby lose much of her influence in the Shaikhdom. On the other hand, Meade claimed, there was no chance of the Government of India increasing the pay attached to the post. However, the funds to provide "a really efficient Agent" in Bahrain might be forthcoming if Shaikh ^CIsā could be induced to ask the British to manage his

¹ Ibid.

Customs. Over the previous decade, the trade of Bahrain had increased very greatly and had reached about 8 million rupees. At four per cent this should yield more than Rs. 300,000, far more than the amount for which Shaikh ^CIsā farmed the Customs.¹ Although the First Assistant Resident, Prideaux, had found Shaikh ^CIsā to be guarded and disposed to procrastinate on the subject of the customs, Meade reported that he himself intended to broach the matter. The Resident was aware that the Shaikh was anxious that the British should acknowledge the right of his son Hamad to succeed him and this "opportunity" might be a "good one to place our position at Bahrein on a satisfactory footing".²

The Indian Foreign Secretary, Cuningham, agreed that, if Rahīm had to be replaced, a mere newswriter would be "of little use as Agent, especially when called upon to protect British interests against outside influence". There would certainly be no harm in sounding Shaikh ^CIsā about the customs.³ In fact the whole question Meade had raised was by no means as simple and innocuous as Cuningham believed. The question of British representation in Bahrain, and the control of the Customs, which Meade had linked with it, were bound up with the issue of gun-running to Afghanistan via the Gulf ports and Persia.

1 On 31 October 1897 Shaikh ^CIsā signed an agreement farming out the Customs to the firm of banians for a further term of two years starting in April 1900. ^CIsā was to be paid Rs. 4,800 per month, i.e. Rs. 115,200 over the two-year period, plus another Rs. 36,000, making a total of Rs. 151,200. A copy of this agreement may be found in L/P & S/7/138, register No. 1318a.

2 Meade to Cuningham, 2 October 1897, L/P & S/7/104, register No. 711-12.

3 Cuningham to Meade, 8 November 1897, L/P & S/7/104, register No. 711-12.

Action had been taken by the Government of India to put a stop to this traffic at least as early as 1880. By 1891, common action was being taken by the Governments of India, Persia and Muscat. After the Government of Persia, in April 1895, had taken fresh measures to confiscate arms imported into its ports, one of the arms firms, Francis Times and Co., turned its attention to the establishment of a depot in Bahrain.¹ This firm was a partnership between a Parsi and an Englishman.² In 1896 they asked the Assistant Resident at Bushire for a letter of introduction to the Shaikh of Bahrain for commercial purposes. The Residency required them to give an assurance that they did not intend to deal in arms there. Francis Times were able to get round this difficulty by exploiting the commercial interests of the British Agent in Bahrain, Agha Muhammad Rahīm.³

At the beginning of 1896, Shaikh ^cIsā had published a notification forbidding the introduction of arms into the islands since he feared that they might be used against himself. However, he had also given a concession to his wazīr to import arms for re-export on condition that they were not to be sold on the islands. This concession was obtained from the wazīr by Rahīm who, in turn, made it over to Francis Times. This firm made Rahīm their Agent and relied on him to make the retail sales of the quantities of arms and ammunition they now began to send to Bahrain. Francis Times was one of those firms in

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 9 August 1898, register No. 711-12, L/P & S/7/104; memorandum by Francis Times and Co., 7 March 1898, L/P & S/3/363, p. 369.

2 Meade's confidential observations on protests made by merchants against seizure of their arms in places under the British Resident in the Persian Gulf, 16 May 1898, enclosure in Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 16 May 1898, No. 34, register No. 711-12, L/P & S/7/104.

3 India Office to Foreign Office, 9 August 1898, L/P & S/7/104, register No. 711-12.

which Rahīm was interested to which he had extended the privilege of paying only three per cent import duty instead of the four per cent normally paid to the Customs in Bahrain. Thus, when, in September 1897, those banians who were farmers of the Customs complained to Meade about Rahīm's actions in reducing their Customs revenue, the Resident had, for the first time, discovered the connection between his Agent in Bahrain and Francis Times.¹

When Rahīm discovered that Meade was opposed to his trading ventures and was enquiring into the arms traffic, he had tried to get out of the business. He induced the Shaikh, through his wazīr, to demand the return of the concession. However, Francis Times refused to give it back and, eventually, on 20 January 1898 or thereabouts the Shaikh had the firm's stocks in Bahrain seized.² This occurred at a moment when the British and Indian Governments were taking firm action against the arms trade of the Gulf. During the British military operations on the North-West Frontier of India in 1897-98, the traffic in arms, chiefly of Belgian manufacture, exported from Manchester and other British ports, had increased to such an extent that special enquiries began to be made. Arms and cartridges, exactly like those exported from England by British and other firms to the Gulf ports, had been discovered by British troops at Pasni, Tirah and other places on the Indian frontier.³ In December 1897, pressure from the

1 Meade's confidential observations of 16 May 1898, No. 34, L/P & S/7/104, register No. 711-12.

2 Ibid.

3 Salisbury to Charles Hardinge, Her Majesty's Minister, Tehran, 8 December 1897, tel. No. 31, L/P & S/3/361, p. 1016; Sec. of State for India to Govt. of India, 12 January 1900 (Secret) L/P & S/3/375.

British Government resulted in the seizure of arms consignments at Bushire.¹ A month later, a declaration, initiated and sponsored by the British Government, prohibiting the trade in arms, had been issued by the Sultan of Muscat.² In April 1898 the British succeeded in obtaining from Shaikh ^ḤIsā a proclamation absolutely prohibiting the import of arms into, or the export of arms from, Bahrain.³

Meanwhile, in March 1898, Francis Times had written to the Foreign Office about the confiscation in the previous January of the arms they had deposited in Bahrain. The firm alleged that it was the "British Consul at Bahrain", in other words Rahīm, who had ordered the seizure.⁴ In fact when Meade had visited Bahrain in February 1898, a few weeks after the seizure, he apparently "heard", it is not said from whom, that Shaikh ^ḤIsā had ordered the confiscation at the

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- 1 Hardinge to Foreign Office, 16 December 1897 (tel.), 'Selection from Correspondence relative to the Traffic in Arms in the Persian Gulf, 1897-98', Part I, L/P & S/18/C87, p. 8.
 - 2 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 17 December 1897 (tel.), L/P & S/3/361, pp. 1007-08 and notification by Faisal b. Turki, Sultan of Muscat, 13 January 1898, 'Selection from Correspondence relative to the Traffic in Arms in the Persian Gulf, 1897-98', Part I, p. 22.
 - 3 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Resident, Bushire, 26 April 1898, tel. No. 710 E.A., register 711-12, L/P & S/7/104; Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 30 May 1898, No. 39, L/P & S/7/104; 'Agreement with the Shaikh of Bahrain for the suppression of Trade in Arms', 30 April 1898, item No. XIV, Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 238.
 - 4 Francis Times to Foreign Office, 7 March 1898, 'Selection from Correspondence relative to the Traffic in Arms in the Persian Gulf, 1897-98', Part I, pp. 42-43. In 1900 Francis Times sued Meade for damages in respect of the seizure of their arms at Bahrain and elsewhere in the Gulf in 1897-98. See Messrs. Hollams, Sons, Coward, and Hawksley, Solicitors to Meade, 23 July 1900, enclosure in Meade to India Office, 25 July 1900, L/P & S/3/378. Judgment was given in favour of Meade in 1901. See Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 23 May 1901, L/P & S/3/352, register No. 2011a.

suggestion of Raḥīm.¹ At the same time, Meade claimed, Raḥīm had acted entirely in a private capacity and without reference to the Residency at Bushire.² Meade alleged that he had been told by Shaikh ʿĪsā, in February 1898, that he, the Shaikh, had become anxious to stop the import of arms into Bahrain since "he knew his enemies were being rapidly armed by them". It was also Meade's claim that "the Shaikh also had no intimation that the Government wanted the arms seized".³ This may well have been true. However, on 17 November 1897, Meade had personally told Ḥamad b. ʿĪsā, the Shaikh's eldest son, who was on a visit to Bushire, that it was "highly necessary" that the storage of arms in Bahrain should be prevented and that this message should be passed on to his father.⁴

Shaikh Ḥamad visited Bushire in November 1897 with a view to securing British acquiescence to his right to succeed his father as Shaikh of Bahrain when ʿĪsā b. Ali died. Shaikh ʿĪsā was at this time most anxious to ensure the unchallenged succession to the rulership of Bahrain of his favourite and eldest surviving⁵ son Ḥamad. Shaikh ʿĪsā's concern for Ḥamad's future was largely a result of the discontent and ambition of ʿĪsā's nephew, Ali b. Ahmad. Shaikh Ali was the son of ʿĪsā's brother Ahmad, who, until his death in 1888, had

1 'Colonel Meade's Instructions /to his Solicitors7', enclosure No. 2 in Meade to India Office, 22 August 1900, L/P & S/3/378.

2 *Ibid.*; Meade's confidential observations of 16 May 1898, No. 34, L/P & S/7/104, register No. 711-12.

3 'Colonel Meade's Instructions /to his Solicitors7', enclosure No. 2 in Meade to India Office, 22 August 1900, L/P & S/3/378.

4 Memorandum by J.C. Gaskin, 2 December 1897, R/15/1/315.

5 The death of his older son, Ṣalmān, had been reported in 'Administration Report', 1893-94, p. 7.

played an important part in the administration of Bahrain alongside Shaikh ^CIsā.¹ Shaikh Ali felt that Shaikh ^CIsā was preventing him from inheriting both his father's estates and his position in the administration of Bahrain. Ali was a powerful rival to Shaikh Hamad for the rulership of Bahrain. He was known to be much more capable than Hamad. Moreover, Ali was also strongly supported by his forceful mother, who had married Shaikh ^CIsā after the death of Ali's father.²

Shaikh Hamad could best be protected by obtaining the approval of the British Government for his claim to the succession. Thus, in October 1897, Shaikh ^CIsā formally nominated Hamad as his successor and asked the Resident to secure the recognition of the Government of India for this act.³ The staff at the Residency were well aware that such a recognition would be contrary to established policy and without precedent.⁴ During Shaikh Hamad's visit to Bushire, in November 1897, he was told by Meade that he had reason to believe that, as a rule, there existed in Bahrain a system of appointing a ruler, or a successor to a deceased ruler, by "the tribal voice". Meade, conveyed to the Government of India Shaikh Hamad's request for recognition, stating that he had told Hamad that he was "aware of the advantages which an

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- 1 See above, pp. 147-48, and references cited there for Shaikh Ahmad's share of the revenues of Bahrain, and the disposition of his property after his death.
 - 2 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 12 March 1899, No. 68, P/5724, May 1899, pp. 49-52.
 - 3 Will of ^CIsā b. Ali, October 1897, enclosure in Shaikh ^CIsā to Meade, 7 February 1898, R/15/1/315, pp. 84-85; 'Administration Report, 1897-98', p. 7.
 - 4 Minute by an unidentified Asst. at the Bushire Residency, 8 February 1897, R/15/1/315; memorandum by Gaskin, 26 August 1897, R/15/1/315; Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 5 December 1897, No. 124, R/15/1/315.

undisputed succession would bring to the Island".¹

On 23 March 1898, Meade prepared a minute on the subject. When Shaikh ^ḤIsā had, on an earlier occasion, in 1890, indicated a wish that his eldest son should be recognised, Colonel Ross had been of the opinion that a previous recognition would "create jealousies". Meade also observed that, if the Government agreed to Shaikh ^ḤIsā's request, this would bind them to maintain Hamad in rulership. He wished to have more information about the customs and practice of the Gulf Arabs with regard to succession. If Hamad was given recognition, what would be the probable reaction of the people of Bahrain and the surrounding tribes? Would it strengthen British influence without increasing their responsibilities "to any undue extent"? Would such a recognition ensure a peaceful succession and thereby benefit British trade?²

The Resident's minute was forwarded for comment to various British officials in the Gulf area who had special knowledge relating to the issues Meade had raised. Surveying the traditions of the Arabs of Oman, Bahrain, and Muhammara the officials observed that the succession to the Shaikhship in important Arab tribes to a great extent rested with the elders of the tribe. The eldest and most capable member of the ruling family usually succeeded independently of any nomination by the late Shaikh. However, when a son had acted as his

¹ Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 5 December 1897, No. 124, R/15/1/315.

² Minute by Meade, 23 March 1898, R/15/1/315.

father's deputy and proved his capability, it was likely that he would succeed rather than an untried uncle. In such a case, the people necessarily regarded the Shaikh's favourite as their future ruler. As far as Bahrain itself was concerned, in view of its previous history, the recognition of a particular individual as a successor before Shaikh ^CIsā's death occurred should have the beneficial effect of deterring any of the rivals from resorting to violence to secure their ends. Where tribes were tributary to another power, the nomination of a successor by that paramount power was accepted practice. The case of tribes subject to or under the protection of Turkey was one example.¹

Meade's First Assistant at the Residency, Captain Prideaux, emphasized the political aspects of the proposal in an influential and significant minute. He asserted that the British agent in Bahrain was not a consular but "a Residency (political) Agent", and it seemed to him to be "a pity that Government will not declare once and for all that the status of Bahrein towards the Government of India is the same as that of the native states in India, by reason of our treaties with the island, and more recent closer relations".²

By the terms of the Convention which the British Government had signed in 1861, the Shaikh of Bahrain had been recognised as an "independent ruler".³ Since that time, by means of the Exclusive

1 W.M. Donally, Vice-Consul, Muḥammara, to Meade, 14 April 1898, No. 44; Surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel Jayakar, Muscat, to Fagan, 17 May 1898, No. 6; Memorandum by J.C. Gaskin, 30 April 1898, R/15/1/315.

2 Minute by Prideaux, 2 June 1898, R/15/1/315, pp. 92-93.

3 Item No. X, Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 234-35.

Agreements of 1880 and 1892, the British had curtailed the powers of the Shaikh to act freely in foreign relations. According to Prideaux, the Exclusive Agreement of 1892 had brought Bahrain "entirely within [the British] sphere of influence and exclud[ed] that of all other powers".¹ In short, by this interpretation, Bahrain was no longer an "independent state".

The Resident now had what he wanted. Meade stated that the opinions he had received on the question of succession in Bahrain had confirmed him in his original opinion that "the time has come to take a more decided position in Bahrein" than formerly. Closely following the text of Prideaux's minute, Meade added that

the treaty engagements entered into between the British Government and the Sheikhs of Bahrein, followed by more recent closer relations, appear to justify an intimation by the British Government that the status of Bahrein towards the Government of India is identical with that of protected Native states in India.²

Should such a step be taken, the recognition of Shaikh Hamad would be merely following the precedent frequently adopted in India. On the other hand, it would not be opposed to Arab ideas, because Shaikh ^ʿIsā had been able to obtain the approval of many of the leading men of the Āl Khalīfa to his succession arrangements.³ Meade then pointed out the advantages for Britain which might be obtained by the

1 Note by Prideaux to Meade, 11 June 1898, R/15/1/315.

2 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 June 1898, No. 37-S.A., L/P & S/7/108.

3 See the forty-four signatures and seals of the principal men of the Āl Khalīfa and others in Bahrain appended to the will of Shaikh ^ʿIsā, October 1897, declaring Shaikh Hamad to be his successor, R/15/1/315, pp. 86-88.

exploitation of Shaikh ^CIsā's anxiety about Hamad's future. The Shaikh should be called on, "as a condition of [Hamad's] recognition, to enter into even closer political relations with us than at present exist". Meade suggested that "advantage may be taken of the recognition of his son to urge Sheikh Esa to place the control of the customs in our hands". This would not only solve the Shaikh's financial problems, it would also "immensely improve our position not only in Bahrein itself, but also generally throughout the Persian Gulf". Another "not unimportant" reason for recommending the recognition of Shaikh Hamad was that it ought effectually to put an end to Turkish pretensions with regard to Bahrain. Meade suggested that the Turks should be told, in connection with their protest about the alleged British intention to send a Vice-Consul to Bahrain, that the representative the British maintained in the Shaikhdom was not a consular officer but "a Residency (Political) Agent under the Government of India". Meade strongly recommended that a Political, and not a consular, officer of higher rank than Agha Muhammad Rahīm should be appointed.¹

✓ The agent in question soon provided material to reinforce these views. On 2 July 1898 Rahīm sent Meade a long list of oppressions which, the Agent claimed, Shaikh ^CIsā was perpetrating on his subjects in order to raise revenue. As a result, discontent was increasing among the inhabitants of Bahrain, including members of the ruling Āl Khalīfa. There was even a possibility, as a result of this discontent, of some of the leading Āl Khalīfa seeking asylum in the

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 June 1898, No. 37-S.A., L/P & S/7/108.

territories of another Government, with all the ensuing complications which that would create for the British. But the British Agent openly confessed his total ineffectiveness in influencing Shaikh ^CIsā to change his ways. Rahīm admitted that, when he gave the Shaikh advice "for the good of his dignity and his subjects, he does not listen but acts contrarily".¹

On receipt of this letter at the Residency, Gaskin recorded his suspicion that anti-British elements, "mostly Turkish subjects and Anglophobes of loose character", were behind these developments. The chief among this group was Muhammad b. ^CAbdul Wahāb, who had played such a notorious role in events in Qatar in the 1880s. Since then he had settled in Darīn, a village on an island off Qatīf, where he had founded a settlement. He had further been recognised as Governor of Darīn by the Turks, who had also given him a decoration. Muhammad sheltered absconding debtors and bankrupts from Bahrain and was trying to attract people from Bahrain to settle at Darīn and thereby increase the importance of the latter.²

Muhammad b. ^CAbdul Wahāb and the others in this anti-British group were, Gaskin believed, giving Shaikh ^CIsā bad advice. They were pointing out to him methods of raising money by which, they claimed, he would be able to meet the many demands made upon him, but their true objective was to create discontent in Bahrain for the benefit of Turkey. These intriguers were telling Shaikh ^CIsā that the British had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of Bahrain and that he was

1 Rahīm to Meade (in Arabic), 2 July 1898, R/15/1/315, pp. 120-26.

2 Minute by Gaskin, 11 July 1898, R/15/1/315, pp. 126-34.

independent and could act as he pleased. No doubt, added Gaskin, they were also feeding Shaikh ^CIsā's suspicions that the British might not support the succession to the Shaikhship of his son Hamad. Shaikh ^CIsā was trying to secure the support for Hamad's succession of "alien tribes", which spent the summer in Bahrain and wintered in Qatar, by paying them liberally. Since the Shaikh's revenues were insufficient to meet the demands both of the members of the various branches of the ruling family and of the tribesmen, he was proving receptive to the suggestions of the intriguers for money-raising ventures. Those who were being hardest hit by these oppressions were those who were the "backbone" of the island's economy, the traders. If, as a result, the trade of Bahrain was dislocated, it would have a disastrous effect, especially since nearly all the imports into the islands came from India. Moreover, there was a political danger in the deteriorating situation in Bahrain. The members of the ruling family, knowing that Shaikh ^CIsā was in practice dependent on British goodwill, considered that the Government of India was "more or less responsible for the state of affairs" obtaining in the Shaikhdom. Gaskin considered that it was only just that the British should protect the people of Bahrain from the oppressions they were suffering at the hands of the Shaikh.¹

The response of Prideaux to this new intelligence from Bahrain was that the influence there of Agha Muhammad Rahīm seemed to have "considerably decreased"², whilst Meade himself noted the hostility towards Shaikh ^CIsā which the Agent's letter betrayed.³

1 Minute by Gaskin, 11 July 1898, R/15/1/315, pp. 126-34.

2 Minute by Prideaux, 4 August 1898, R/15/1/315, p. 135.

3 Minute by Meade, 15 August 1898, R/15/1/315, p. 135.

In a despatch of October 1898 regarding the question of Shaikh Hamad's succession and the associated issues of the Customs and the improvement of British representation in Bahrain, the Government of India, unlike Meade, considered that the British position in respect to Bahrain did not need revision. Also, it was a principle of British policy generally "to avoid interference in the internal affairs of a Chiefship and particularly in dynastic disputes". However, to avoid the risk of disturbances and continued intrigue over the succession issue in Bahrain, the Government of India was disposed to recognise Shaikh Hamad.¹

On the question of the control of Bahrain's Customs by Britain, the Government of India observed that such a measure "should secure an effective check on the trade in arms". If Meade was authorised to recognise Shaikh Hamad as successor to the Shaikhship, the Government of India thought that the Resident "might, perhaps, simultaneously inform the present Shaikh, in general terms, that we should welcome some improved arrangement in respect to the customs". The authorities in India had, deliberately or otherwise, overlooked Meade's recommendation that recognition of Hamad's succession should only be given in return for control of the Customs. They would be prepared to lend Shaikh C-Isa the services of a qualified officer to manage his Customs, and Meade might be able at the same time to "devise some more suitable arrangement than that now in force for the discharge of local political duties in Bahrain". However, it was considered that Meade's suggestion for the appointment to Bahrain of a Political Officer of higher rank than

1 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 27 October 1898, No. 194, L/P & S/7/108, register No. 1044.

Agha Muhammad Rahīm was too vague for the Government of India to base any recommendation on it and Meade had been asked to report again on this question.¹ This move clearly reflects the lack of any real interest, at this time, on the part of the Government of India in a forward policy in the Gulf.

The attitude of the India Office was quite different.

Sir William Lee-Warner, the Secretary of the Political & Secret Department, noted, in November 1898, that, in view of the commercial and strategic importance of Bahrain, it would be wise "to tighten our hold on the place". The arrangement by which a local trader was given "a few rupees" to represent British interests in the Shaikhdom had, not surprisingly, proved obnoxious to Shaikh ^CIsā and others in Bahrain. Lee-Warner clearly favoured Meade's proposal for a change in the existing form of British representation. It was true that, in the past, Bahrain had been recognised by Britain as having an independent Government. Even so, in Lee-Warner's view, "we must ... mean independent of all Governments except our own, because we have two treaties of 1861 and 1880 ... which are of a protective character". Further, Lee-Warner observed, the 1880 agreement had actually omitted reference to Bahrain's independence.²

Even so, no action could be taken in pursuance of Lee-Warner's suggestion until the further report, which the Government of India had asked Meade to make, had been received. Therefore, the India Office,

1 Ibid.

2 Minute by W. Lee-Warner, n.d. but some time in November 1898, L/P & S/7/108, register No. 1044.

in December 1898, merely secured the approval of the Foreign Office to the recognition of Hamad.¹

Meade soon pressed for instructions about the recognition issue. The matter had become urgent because the Resident intended visiting Bahrain personally in the near future. Meade added that it would probably be desirable, if Shaikh Hamad was recognised, "to declare our protectorate over Bahrein, and thus put an end to all pretensions on the part of other powers". Shaikh 'Isā ought to fly the British flag and "it should be formally notified that Bahrein is under our protection".²

There was nothing essentially new about this pressure from Meade for Bahrain to be brought into a position of greater dependence on Britain. It came, however, just at the moment when the Government of India received a new head. On 6 January 1899, Lord Elgin had been replaced by Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India. Curzon was an unashamed imperialist.³ His great ambition in life was to safeguard the British Empire and, especially, British rule in India which he regarded as the cornerstone of Britain's imperial greatness. Curzon's view of the defence of India was cast in terms of the seige. He regarded India's position as "like a fortress with the vast moat of the sea on two of her faces, and with mountains for her walls on the remainder".

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 24 November 1898; Foreign Office to India Office, 9 December 1898; Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 16 December 1898, Secret No. 44, L/P & S/7/108, register No. 1044.

2 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 10 January 1899, No. 2, R/15/1/315, pp. 137-38.

3 Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, Sec. of State for India, 9 July 1903, Curzon papers, F.111/162, quoted in David Dilks, Curzon in India (London, 1970), I, 237.

Beyond those walls extended "a glacis", Curzon's strategy in respect of which was described in the following terms:

We do not want to occupy it, but we also cannot afford to see it occupied by our foes. We are quite content to let it remain in the hands of our allies and friends, but if rivalry and unfriendly influences creep up to it and lodge themselves right under our walls, we are compelled to intervene, because a danger would thereby grow up that might one day menace our security.¹

For Curzon, there was no more important part of this 'glacis', which he considered vital to the defence of India, than Persia and the Gulf. Already, before he became Viceroy, he had built up a reputation as an expert on Persian and Gulf affairs. In 1892 he had published his classic Persia and the Persian Question. Moreover, Curzon had a great sense of personal mission with regard to the Gulf. In a letter of 8 January 1900, he had told St. John Brodrick, who was then occupying Curzon's old post of Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that he, Curzon, "who had worked for 10 years to get my countrymen to understand the question and its importance" had been "fated to be" Viceroy of India, "the very place where I have the opportunity to save the position for England".²

In reply to his letter of 10 January, the Resident was informed by the new Viceroy's Government that he might tell Shaikh ^CĪsā that they recognised Shaikh Hamad as successor-designate to the rulership of Bahrain. Whilst giving Shaikh ^CĪsā this news, Meade should try to

1 Curzon's speech in the Budget debate in the Indian Assembly, 1904, quoted in 'Confidential Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon in the Foreign Department', Vol. IV, Persia and the Persian Gulf, Curzon Papers, F.111/531.

2 Curzon to Brodrick, 8 January 1900, Midleton Papers, Add. 50073, pp. 283-90.

induce him to reform his Customs administration, preferably by applying to the Government of India for the loan of a "qualified officer" to control the Customs. With reference to Meade's proposal for the formal declaration of a British protectorate over Bahrain, however, Lord Curzon's government was unwilling to go so far at this time, although their reply indicated that they certainly had it in mind as a possible course of action in the future. The appointment of an officer to superintend the Customs might afford a suitable means of improving Britain's political representation in Bahrain and the Resident was asked to submit proposals on this as well.¹

Meade visited the Shaikhdom in February-March 1899. Although he had been given no specific sanction to do so, Meade delayed telling Shaikh ^CIsā that the Government of India was prepared to accede to his request, in the hope that recognition could be used as a bargaining counter to win concessions from the Shaikh on the Customs and representation issues. Meade stressed that Shaikh ^CIsā's hopes lay only in obedience to the wishes of the British Government, one of which was that his Customs administration should be reformed, preferably by an officer loaned from India.² Shaikh ^CIsā told Meade that the amount he was receiving from the banians for the Customs was about Rs. 110,000 a year.³ This, Meade pointed out, was only about a third

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Meade, 7 February 1899, No. 205-E.A., R/15/1/315, p. 141.

2 Note by Gaskin on Meade's visit to Bahrain, 10 March 1899, R/15/1/315, pp. 152-60.

3 Meade was incorrect. It has been shown above (p. 168) that, in fact, ^CIsā, by an agreement of 1897, was to receive only Rs. 151,200 for a two-year period in 1900-02.

of what the Shaikh ought to receive for his Customs. Therefore, if a reform could be effected, the Shaikh could put his financial affairs in order and thereby "be able to defy his enemies more successfully". By recommending the reform of the Customs of Bahrain, the British Government, claimed Meade, "did in no way intend to interfere in the administration of Bahrein, nor did they wish to take any portion of the Customs revenue".¹ In making this statement, Meade was, once more, being less than fully honest with Shaikh ^ḤIsā. In his demi-official letter to Sir William Cuninghame on 2 October 1897, the Resident had suggested that control of the Customs would provide funds for better British representation in Bahrain.²

The Shaikh responded warily that he wanted time to think the matter over and to consult his relations before giving a reply. However, at a subsequent interview during the same visit, Meade discovered that, about six months previously, Shaikh ^ḤIsā had extended the banians' lease of the Customs farm for a further period of two years. The Resident told the Shaikh that he was very displeased with his action, that he expected to be consulted before such measures were resorted to, that the Government "would not view his action with favour" and that, by this action, the Shaikh was "hindering the consummation of his wishes in regard to his son Hamed".³ Shaikh ^ḤIsā promised to consider the British proposals for reform of the Customs and to contact the Resident before the expiry of the current contract with the banians.⁴

1 Note by Gaskin on Meade's visit to Bahrain, 10 March 1899, R/15/1/315, pp. 152-60.

2 See above, p. 167.

3 Note by Gaskin, 10 March 1899, R/15/1/315, pp. 157-58.

4 Ibid.

Meade reported to the Government of India that, in view of Shaikh ^cIsā's unsatisfactory attitude with regard to the Customs question, he had decided to refer to the Government before informing the Shaikh of their decision on the succession issue. Meade pointed out that there would be no obstacle to at once communicating to Shaikh ^cIsā the Government's decision to recognise Hamad should that be thought advisable. However, once this was done, Shaikh ^cIsā would consider himself secure. On the other hand, as long as the information was withheld from him, the Government would have "a certain means of pressing him to improve his affairs in the hope of obtaining the recognition".¹

Meade was convinced that the Shaikh's attitude to the disposal of the Customs was due to the difficulty he was experiencing in obtaining sufficient ready money to meet all the calls which were made on him. The Resident therefore suggested that, if the Government were able to offer Shaikh ^cIsā a sum of money in the way of an advance with which he could clear off his debts to those who were farming the Customs on condition that he entrusted their charge to a Government official, then the matter could easily be settled.²

The Government of India characteristically replied that Meade's suggestion of a loan could not be proceeded with unless it was presented

1 Meade to Sec. of Govt. of India, F.D., 12 March 1899, No. 27, R/15/1/315, pp. 162-69.

2 *Ibid.* pp. 169-71. This suggestion for a Government loan to enable Shaikh ^cIsā to pay off his debts to the banians had, apparently, originally been made by Prideaux. See minute by Prideaux to Meade, 10 March 1899, R/15/1/315, p. 160. Indeed, Prideaux had drafted Meade's reply to the Government of India; see minute by Meade to Prideaux, 11 March 1899, R/15/1/315, p. 161.

in a more definite form. In particular, the size of the loan required and the terms of repayment needed to be reported. However, Meade's letter had been yet another piece of evidence of the desirability of early measures being taken "to secure better representation and more continuous influence [in Bahrain] than can be looked for from occasional visits by the Political Resident". In the meantime, Meade was allowed discretion as to making known or withholding the orders of the Government respecting the succession issue.¹

A new inconvenience for the logic of the British position soon developed. In May 1899 Shaikh ^ʿIsā complained to Meade about the activities of an American missionary, S.M. Zwemer.² The Shaikh enclosed a petition which had, apparently, been submitted to him by eighteen inhabitants of Bahrain alleging that Zwemer had been "openly interfering in religious matters, and denouncing our Prophet Muhammad".³ Six months before, in November 1898, the Shaikh had informed a British agent in Bahrain that Zwemer was attacking Islam and causing annoyance to the inhabitants of the Shaikhdom.⁴ At that time, Meade had contacted Zwemer to caution him against causing trouble in Bahrain. Now Meade recommended that it would "probably be safer" if the American was advised to leave Bahrain.⁵

1 Deputy Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Meade, 24 April 1899, No. 616-E.A., R/15/1/315, pp. 176-77.

2 Shaikh ^ʿIsā to Meade, 10 May 1899, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657. Zwemer had previously been in Basra and Muscat. Whilst in Bahrain he wrote Arabia: The Cradle of Islam (New York, 1900). Later he founded the journal The Moslem World in the U.S.A.

3 'Petition from inhabitants of Bahrein, to Sheikh [ʿIsā], Chief of Bahrein', 9 May 1899, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

4 Shaikh ^ʿIsā to Abdul Rahmān b. Ali Taqī (the agent of Agha Muḥammad Rahīm), 21 November 1898, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

5 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 29 May 1899, No. 76, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

The Government of India agreed with Meade, but the matter was not quite as simply as they presented it to the Home Government.¹ As the India Office pointed out, by the Exclusive Agreement of 1880 the British government had required the Shaikh of Bahrain to abstain from negotiating with foreign powers other than Britain and to refuse permission for these powers to establish consular agencies in the island.² Since foreign powers were debarred from representing the interests of their own nationals to the Shaikh of Bahrain, this responsibility had passed to the protecting power. This incident, in fact, was an early example of an issue which was to become even more important as the interest in Bahrain of European powers other than Britain continued to grow in the following period.

Lee-Warner had been surprised at India's stand on Zwemer since there was no evidence to show that the missionary had behaved improperly. The official stated that Bahrain was "a British protectorate" and that, therefore, the United States Government would expect Britain to secure for her subjects proper rights and privileges". These certainly included religious freedom, and the British Government "could not go to America and ask it to recall Mr. Zwemer on the evidence now before us".³

Nevertheless, on 28 July 1899, the India Office told the Foreign

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- 1 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 22 June 1899, Secret No. 118, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.
 - 2 India Office to Foreign Office, 28 July 1899, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.
 - 3 Minute by Sir William Lee-Warner, n.d., L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

Office that they agreed with the Government of India that Zwemer should not be allowed to stay in Bahrain against the wishes of the Shaikh.¹

From the minutes written on the question at the India Office it is evident that the Government of India's recommendation was endorsed because it was considered that the danger to British interests which would arise from an attempt to allow Zwemer to remain in Bahrain against Shaikh ^CIsā's wishes over-rode the sense of obligation to defend the right of foreign missionaries to proselytise on the island. Sir Alfred Lyall of the Council of India noted that, if Britain insisted that Shaikh ^CIsā should tolerate Zwemer's mission "our protectorate will become unpalatable to the people of Bahrain".² Another member of the Council, Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, minuted that "a row about a matter of this sort" in the Gulf might prove most damaging to British interests just then.³

Lyall observed that there was a danger that the presence of Zwemer in Bahrain could become some kind of a precedent. If one missionary was encouraged to operate in the Shaikhdom, others "of different nationalities" were likely to establish themselves. Moreover, it was not just a matter of missionaries. Lyall noted that Meade had recently reported that "certain Frenchmen wanted to enter Bahrain and that there were "Russians and Germans travelling about the shores of the Persian Gulf". If the British Government failed to support Shaikh ^CIsā when he wanted to get Europeans out of Bahrain, it could not be expected that he would defer to British wishes whenever objection was raised to others who might want

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 28 July 1899, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

2 Minute by Lyall, n.d., L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

3 Minute by Fitzpatrick, 14 July 1899, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

to gain a footing there.¹

The report by Meade to which Lyall had referred was a secret communication to the Government of India on 28 May 1899. The Resident was most concerned about the activities in the Gulf of certain foreign nationals whom Meade considered to be agents of their respective governments. One in particular, a Frenchman named Goguyer, had arrived in Bahrain where he had been received by Muhammad b. ^cAbdul Wahāb. Muhammad had arranged for Goguyer to meet the Shaikh and to have "every facility for enquiring into the trade of the place". It was rumoured that Goguyer had told various people in Bahrain that they might easily obtain French protection and that, for a small sum, he would give them certificates of naturalization. Meade reminded the Government of India that the French had for some time been trying to "gain subjects and protégés". Bahrain was a particularly fruitful area for such an attempt since many of those living on the island, both Arabs and non-Arabs, did not profess to be subjects of Shaikh ^cĪsā and might consider that they were free to take any nationality they liked. As far as Goguyer himself was concerned, the Resident thought it was probable that he was to some extent supported by his Government, or, at any rate, by the French consular authorities at Muscat and Bushire, and that he would try to advance French political interests as well as his own commercial concerns. Also, Meade warned, Goguyer was thought to be interested in the arms traffic so that there was a danger that "the French name and

1 Minute by Lyall, n.d., L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657. In fact, Zwemer was not asked to leave Bahrain. After the American Board of Arabian Missions had enjoined on Zwemer "the duty of exercising the utmost caution compatible with the performance of his mission" the matter was dropped. See India Office to Viceroy, 5 January 1900 (secret), L/P & S/3/373.

flag" would be employed to bring arms into the Gulf.¹

In the same letter, Meade had stated his belief that, before long, there would be "considerable activity displayed by various European powers or their subjects in these regions". The only way to meet their efforts would be to increase Britain's own consular representation in the Gulf and to help British merchants to establish themselves there. The Resident proposed specifically that consular representatives ought, as a matter of urgency, to be established at Bahrain and Bandar Abbas and that they should be encouraged to move about and visit the country in their neighbourhood. These representatives, Meade was convinced, should be "Englishmen of good position and standing". It was important that the British authorities responsible for Gulf affairs should encourage British trade more than they had done in the past. In particular, if Britain had "a proper official at Bahrain", foreign traders would find it difficult to obtain a footing there and British interests would benefit.²

At this time, Meade also linked growing foreign influence in Bahrain with the issue of quarantine. Meade had directed his First Assistant, Captain Prideaux, to try, whilst on a visit to Bahrain, to induce Shaikh ^cIsā to agree to the appointment of a quarantine doctor from India. The Shaikh at first appeared willing to consider this suggestion but later said he was "entirely opposed to any arrangement worked by the British". Meade concluded that this obstructive

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 28 May 1899, No. 75, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 665. For the later activities of Goguyer see Busch, op. cit., pp. 270-303.

2 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 28 May 1899, No. 75, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 665.

attitude on the part of Shaikh ^CIsā was due to the advice of those Turkish subjects under whose influence, the Resident believed, the Shaikh had fallen. Since the British Government had objected to Turkish plans for establishing a quarantine station in Bahrain, the Turks wanted to prevent the British from themselves managing quarantine arrangements on the island. In Meade's opinion, if the idea of effective quarantine arrangements for Bahrain was not to be abandoned, they would have to be operated without the Shaikh's assistance. Therefore Shaikh ^CIsā's objections should be disregarded and that an Assistant Surgeon should be deputed from India to enforce a quarantine. Perhaps a gunboat might be necessary for a time to support the quarantine officer in discharging his duties.¹ However, at this time the Government of India did not feel that such bold action was advisable, and informed Meade that they were not anxious to impose a quarantine officer on Shaikh ^CIsā.²

In July 1899, Lieutenant Commander Lambert of H.M.S. Lapwing ascertained some facts which tended to explain why Shaikh ^CIsā was so obstructive about the quarantine issue. The Shaikh had made his own arrangements to prevent plague being brought into Bahrain. These involved arrivals in so much inconvenience and expense that they were glad to pay bribes in order to evade them. Shaikh ^CIsā therefore stood to lose as much as four or five hundred rupees a month if an English doctor was appointed. Apart from this, Shaikh ^CIsā was, Lambert believed, "completely in the hands of his chief clerk", Sherida,

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 21 May 1899, No. 66, L/P & S/7/115.

2 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Meade, 16 June 1899, tel. No. 867-E.A., L/P & S/7/115.

and of Muhammad b. ^CAbdul Wahāb. These two were in daily contact with Goguyer who was certainly in Bahrain "for political purposes". An agent whom Goguyer had brought with him from Muscat, an Arab by the name of Ali Dabāb, had been telling the Bahrainis that, if an English doctor came to Bahrain, he would interfere with their women; that, if the Shaikh acceded to the quarantine proposal, the British would "only ask for something more"; and that there would soon be other gunboats in the Gulf besides those of Britain. Agha Muhammad Rahīm told Lambert that Goguyer had certainly come to Bahrain with the Shaikh's previous knowledge and consent, if not at his invitation. Rahīm also said that he had noticed a marked difference in Shaikh ^CIsā's attitude during the previous month and that it was difficult to get a reply from the Shaikh at all in answer to requests made to him.¹

The Resident concluded that the answer to the problem was not to send to Bahrain a quarantine officer, who would have to be imposed by force, or at least the threat of force, but urgently to replace Rahīm with a higher and more influential official. Shaikh ^CIsā could have no pretext for opposing a British move to improve their political representation in Bahrain. Meade therefore urged that "an English Political Officer", accompanied by "a small escort", should be posted to Bahrain without delay. Until this was done, and he had "gained some personal influence over the Shaikh", it would "not be expedient" to send a quarantine officer. It was "in the public interest" that the Shaikh's quarantine arrangements, with all their accompanying extortions,

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 16 July 1899, tel; Lieutenant Commander Lambert of H.M.S. Lapwing to Commander H.Q. Phillipps, Senior Naval Officer in the Gulf, 15 July 1899, L/P & S/7/115. Phillipps had passed on Lambert's letter to Meade two days later. See Phillipps to Meade, 17 July 1899, L/P & S/7/115.

should be done away with as soon as possible. However, there was every reason to believe that a medical officer sent by the Government of India would meet with opposition from "the ignorant Arabs, among whom ridiculous stories of the measures taken by our doctors for dealing with the plague in India have been freely circulated".¹ Meade had received a petition purporting to have been drawn up by the subjects of Shaikh ^CIsā and objecting to having British doctors in Bahrain.² This petition, the Resident was convinced, was "a got-up document, prepared by people who wish to keep us out of Bahrein". Even so, it had to be admitted that there was "undoubtedly a bona fide distrust" of British plague measures which was based on reports which had come from India. This distrust could only be overcome by tact and time. But the situation in Bahrain, as far as the British were concerned, was deteriorating so rapidly that no time could be wasted before taking action. However, it would not be an easy task to induce Shaikh ^CIsā to dismiss the two evil counsellors who, Lambert considered, had the Shaikh under their influence. If it could be proved that Muhammad b. ^CAbdul Wahāb was, as Meade believed, "an accredited Agent of the Turkish Government", it might be possible to press Shaikh ^CIsā not to allow him to reside in Bahrain since the Shaikh was bound, by the engagements he had entered into, not to receive the representatives of other powers without British consent.³

In another review of the Customs issue, the Resident proposed,

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- 1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 July 1899, No. 108, L/P & S/7/115.
 - 2 Petition to Shaikh ^CIsā from "about 50 persons of Bahrein", enclosure in Shaikh ^CIsā to Meade, 10 July 1899, L/P & S/7/115.
 - 3 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 July 1899, No. 108, L/P & S/7/115.

whilst reform of the Customs could wait, no time should be lost in arranging for the appointment of a suitable officer to carry out political duties in Bahrain in place of Rahīm. The present native Agent was over fifty-five years old and was not in good health. He should be retired as soon as the appointment of an English officer had been finalized. The stubborn attitude taken up by Shaikh ^ḤIsā of late and his undoubted leanings towards the Turks had been due to the ill feelings which had developed between the Shaikh and Rahīm. The latter had misused his political status to further his commercial interests in the island and had made Shaikh ^ḤIsā feel that he was in his (Rahīm's) power by letting it be known that, as Agent, he could report unfavourably about him to the British authorities.¹

After receiving this letter and Meade's other communication of 17 July 1899 on the quarantine question, the Government of India were in no doubt that Britain's position in Bahrain was unsatisfactory.² In a private letter of 26 July Curzon had already noted that Meade's letters had shown that Shaikh ^ḤIsā, who had fallen under the "control" of Goguyer and Muhammad b. ^ḤAbdul Wahāb, was "rapidly getting out of hand".³ However, the Viceroy considered that the position in Persia and the Gulf generally also left much to be desired. For this he clearly considered that the British officials on the spot were not entirely without blame. It was his intention, he told Hamilton, to "send an officer to reside

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 5 June 1899, No. 81, L/P & S/7/138, register No. 1318.

2 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 10 August 1899, Secret No. 153, L/P & S/7/115. By this time the question of proper quarantine arrangements for Bahrain had become much less urgent, since the plague had died out at Bushire and was at a low ebb in India.

3 Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 26 July 1899, Curzon Papers, F.111/158, pp. 143-50.

permanently at Bahrein before long". Before the end of 1899 he might well replace Meade by "the very best man among our Residents whom I can procure".¹ Not long after he had assumed his post as Viceroy, Curzon had found himself disappointed with the general quality of the officers of the Indian Political Department whom he described as "a very inadequate lot".² As far as Meade himself was concerned, both Salisbury and Hamilton felt that the Resident was a man who was inclined to "outrun his instructions".³ In fact there had for long been a tendency for Residents to 'outrun their instructions' by taking initiatives in the Gulf (as with the signing of the 1880 and 1892 agreements with Bahrain) so that Meade was merely acting in conformity with a long tradition. However, the growth of the interest of European powers in the Gulf in the later 1890s had evidently made the authorities in London more insistent that Residents should adhere strictly to their instructions. On 21 September 1899, Curzon's government took the opportunity presented by a request by the India Office for opinions on a despatch to the Foreign Office from Sir Mortimer Durand, the British Minister at Tehran, to expound at length their attitude to the question of the maintenance of British influence in the area. As far as the Gulf itself was concerned, the Government of India gave a detailed account of the commercial, political and other interests which Britain had acquired in the area over the years.⁴ These interests were threatened

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- 1 Ibid. In fact Meade was replaced in April 1900, see below, p.203. Later, in March 1904, Curzon was to express himself as even more dissatisfied with the man with whom he replaced Meade. See below, pp. 222.
 - 2 Curzon to Sir Arthur Godley, Permanent Under Sec. of State for India, 24 May 1899, Curzon Papers, F.111/158, p. 92c.
 - 3 Hamilton to Curzon, 16 February 1899, Curzon Papers, F.111/158, pp. 18-20.
 - 4 Govt. of India to Sec. of State for India, 21 September 1899, No. 175, L/P & S/7/116, paragraphs 22-26. This despatch is reproduced in J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, A Documentary Record: 1535-1914 (Princeton, 1956), I, 219-49.

by the intrigues of other powers, particularly Russia, France, Germany and Turkey. At Bahrain, such "machinations" would need to be counter-acted "by a more strict enforcement of the conditions to which the Sheikh is by treaty bound".¹ Trouble was brewing in Bahrain, similar to that which had already been encountered at Muscat.² Here, the French Government had, over the last six months, been trying to obtain a position which would provide them with "an independent pied à terre in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf".³ The French had no large-scale interests of a legitimate kind in the Gulf and it seemed that their proceedings in the area could only be construed as "an attempt to cause trouble and annoyance to a possible rival and to lend an independent assistance to the plans of a European ally". The Government of India, in fact, were sure that there was "a Franco-Russian entente in Persia and in the Persian Gulf".⁴

At Muscat the French had some legal basis for their attempt to gain influence at the expense of Britain. This was not the case in Bahrain, where, the Government of India observed, "treaty engagements ... with Her Majesty's Government provide[d] no legitimate excuse for such complications". Even so, it was necessary to take pre-emptive action against such 'complications' "by placing a British officer permanently in the island". Meade's definite proposals on this matter were still awaited, but the Government of India thought that it would

1 Ibid., paragraph 26.

2 Ibid., paragraph 83.

3 Ibid., paragraph 41.

4 Ibid. Curzon had made the same point privately to Salisbury on 16 March 1899, see Curzon Papers, F.111/158, pp. 42a-43.

probably be sufficient to nominate for the post "an officer of a subordinate class".¹

The Resident sent his long-awaited report a few days later. Meade reviewed the great increase in British interests which had occurred there in recent years. Virtually the entire external trade of Bahrain was British. The returns showed that imports had risen from a value of Rs. 2,229,177 in 1878 to Rs. 8,827,650, whilst exports had risen from Rs. 2,181,995 to Rs. 7,940,880. Bahrain, observed Meade, "being generally regarded as under British protection", was increasingly becoming the emporium for the trade of the nearby Arab coast. British interests in the Gulf were far more important than they had been in the past, and other nations were "gradually waking up to the importance of the place". The time was now ripe for strengthening Britain's position in the island. Shaikh ^ḤIsā, who, in the past, used to act in conformity with the advice Residents gave him, was now old, was under the influence of Turkish and French advisers, and was not on good terms with the British Agent. If an "English officer" could be appointed in his place, this would attract more British firms to Bahrain. The presence of such an officer should also "inspire the Chief with greater confidence" than he had at present in "the motives and actions" of the representative of the Government of India. As a result, Shaikh ^ḤIsā would be "obliged to attend more to the wishes and advice of the British Government" than he had done of late. Further, there would be an end to "the squeezing of British subjects by the Shaikh and his officers" and to the "intrigues" which went on between the banians and Shaikh ^ḤIsā,

1 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 21 September 1899, No. 175, L/P & S/7/116, paragraph 83.

for example over the Customs. Among the duties which Meade considered that the new political officer would have to undertake was to give "authorised assistance", in commercial and other matters, to British subjects, as well as to subjects of other powers "so as to avoid the interference of their own Governments on their own behalf".¹ In view of the assurance Meade gave to Shaikh ^CIsā in March 1899 that the British had no intention of interfering in the administration of Bahrain², it is noteworthy that the Resident now advised the Government of India that the new political officer should be invested with judicial powers, both civil and criminal, subordinate to those of the Resident. If the dependence of the Shaikh of Bahrain on the British Government was accepted, recommended Meade, the new officer might also endorse passports issued by the Shaikh to his subjects, and might authenticate other documents if asked to do so. Other duties for the officer to perform at Bahrain would be those carried on in all seaport towns in connection with shipping, including the completion of trade returns and other notarial records. Finally, the Resident recommended that the appointment should be held by a Second Class Political Assistant on Rs. 600 a month, with a local allowance of Rs. 250. The man appointed should be familiar with Arabic.³

However, further delays occurred. The Government of India was not as anxious as Meade to have a high-level officer posted to Manāma. They asked the Resident if he thought it worthwhile to try

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 24 September 1899, No. 128, R/15/1/330.

2 See above, p. 185.

3 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 24 September 1899, No. 128, R/15/1/330.

J. Calcott Gaskin, his extra Assistant at the Residency, as the new Agent in Bahrain. The Government of India said that it was proving difficult to find an officer with the requisite qualifications in their own Political Department. Moreover Gaskin would be much cheaper: he would not require such great expenditure either in pay or in respect of his accommodation. In the opinion of the Government of India, Gaskin would probably stay in Bahrain indefinitely on Rs. 400 a month.¹ However, Meade had quickly replied that he did not consider that, at that time, Gaskin was suitable for Bahrain. He was not, said the Resident, "pure European", was "disposed to intrigue" and had "already been mixed up in Bahrein affairs". Moreover, he was not believed to be liked by Shaikh ^cIsā. Meade was "strongly in favour of an English gentleman".²

Meanwhile Meade, on a visit to Manāma, found out from the syndicate which farmed the Customs that, on 7 October 1899, Shaikh ^cIsā had signed a fresh agreement extending the lease for a further two years starting on 10 March 1902. The banians had added that the Shaikh had taken this action in consideration of receiving a further loan from them, and that his account with them was greatly overdrawn. On being questioned the Shaikh at first attempted to deny what the banians had told the Resident. However, Shaikh Isa had eventually admitted that Meade's information was correct and confessed that he was unable to give any satisfactory explanation of his conduct. Meade had told the Shaikh

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Meade, 18 October 1899, tel. No. 1605-E.A., P/5948, May 1900, No. 93, p. 129.

2 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 19 October 1899, tel., P/5948, May 1900, No. 94, p. 131.

that he would report what had occurred to the Government of India who might, as a result, be doubtful about the advisability of complying with Shaikh ^CIsā's request for Hamad to be recognised as successor-designate.¹

Even Meade's weapon of withholding the decision of the Government of India to recognise Hamad seemed to have failed to induce Shaikh ^CIsā to reform his Customs arrangements. The Resident could only weakly tell the Government of India that nothing further could, for the moment, be done about the Customs issue. Meade hoped that, later the Shaikh might, perhaps see that he had made a mistake and want to "set aside" this new agreement into which he had entered. If this happened, the Government of India would be advised to support the Shaikh against the banians who, claimed Meade, had taken advantage of Shaikh ^CIsā's necessities "to induce him to break his promise".²

Meade went on to try and explain why he thought Shaikh ^CIsā was so stubbornly opposed to yielding to the wishes of the Government of India to send an official to manage the Customs. One reason was the Shaikh's "ignorant dread that we will make it an excuse to interfere gradually, more and more, in the internal affairs of his Chiefship". Also the representations of the banians had had an effect. They had told him that, unless they had the Customs, he would not only get no more advances from them, but he would also have to pay up what he already owed them. Lastly, the Shaikh was well aware that, if a regular system was introduced, "the irregular exactions" which he was in the habit of

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 8 January 1900, L/P & S/7/138, register No. 1318a.

2 Ibid.

making when it suited him would have to cease. In view of all this, the Resident was doubtful if Shaikh ^CIsā would ever ask for the loan of an official to work his Customs. However, the Sultan of Muscat had recently taken action for the direct working of his own Customs and, if that proved successful, Shaikh ^CIsā might decide to follow this example and take the Bahrain Customs into his own hands.¹

Although Meade's use of the succession weapon to secure a Customs reform in Bahrain seemed to have failed, another came to hand through an unexpected opportunity to upgrade British political representation in Bahrain. On 18 January 1900, Agha Muhammad Rahīm, the British Agent in Bahrain, arrived terminally ill in Bushire. The Resident suggested sending Gaskin immediately as the only available temporary replacement. The Government of India sanctioned Gaskin's appointment as Assistant Political Agent at Bahrain as a purely temporary arrangement.²

In the years since 1897 European penetration of the Gulf region had increased at the same time that Shaikh ^CIsā was becoming less amenable to British control than formerly. In May 1900, it was observed at the India Office that³

At the present moment, with Germans at Koweit and Russians knocking at the Persian ports it is essential that we should not shrink from asserting our rights at Bahrein, especially as the Shaikh is getting a little out of hand.

1 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 8 January 1900, L/P & S/7/138, register No. 1318a.

2 Meade to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 18 January 1900 (tel.), L/P & S/7/120, p. 289; Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Meade, 2 February 1900, tel. No. 335-E.A., L/P & S/7/134.

3 Minute by Lee-Warner, 10 May 1900, L/P & S/3/376, register No. 2064.

The reference to the Russians was in connection with the news that a Russian vessel, the Gilyak, had visited Bandar Abbas with a view to securing coaling stations on the Persian coast.¹ German interest in Kuwait had developed out of their activity in the establishment of railways in the Asiatic part of the Ottoman Empire, dating back to the late 1880s.² In their despatch of 21 September 1899, the Government of India had noted that the extension of these "Turko-German railways" to Baghdad and the Gulf was then under discussion. Whilst they did "not question the bona fide commercial enterprise" which was carrying German trade to the shores of the Gulf, the Government of India had noted that German interest in the Gulf added to "the complexities of an already sufficiently difficult situation" there. It was observed that German interests had "a tendency to grow with some rapidity, and by any steps which [were] not always acceptable to their neighbours".³ Thus, when, in January 1900, news had been received that a German Commission intended to visit Kuwait with a view to obtaining a concession for a railway terminus at the harbour there, the interest and concern of the authorities in London had been aroused.⁴

In these circumstances of increasing European activity in the Gulf, Meade himself was replaced by Major Charles Arnold Kemball, who became Acting Resident in April 1900. Kemball's views differed from Meade's

1 Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Bombay, to Admiralty, 16 February 1900, tel. No. 12, L/P & S/3/375, register No. 1805.

2 Edward Mead Earle, Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Baghdad Railway (New York, 1966), p. 30.

3 Govt. of India to Sec. of State for India, 21 September 1899, No. 175, L/P & S/7/116, paragraphs 43 and 44.

4 See telegrams of Sir Nicolas O'Connor, British Ambassador at Constantinople to Salisbury, 5 January 1900, 7 January 1900 and 15 January 1900 and Salisbury to O'Connor, 19 January 1900 (secret tel.), L/P & S/3/375, register No. 1856.

on a number of issues, including representation at Bahrain. Kemball was doubtful if British interests at Bahrain were "of such importance as to necessitate the expenditure which would result from the appointment of an officer of the rank" Meade had suggested, that is a Second Class Political Assistant. It seemed to Kemball that, both from the commercial and the political points of view, an officer of the uncovenanted service would suffice for the permanent appointment. Kemball felt that as Bushire was "within easy reach of Bahrein", the Resident himself could visit the Shaikhdom at short notice if required.¹ Gaskin's appointment was therefore confirmed, subject to revision if it was found to work unsatisfactorily.²

Kemball soon made another important change in Meade's policies towards Bahrain. On 24 December 1900 he recommended the abandonment of Meade's strategy of withholding the news of the Government of India's recognition of Hamad until Shaikh ^cIsā showed signs of yielding to British pressure on the Customs issue. The new Resident was doubtful if any change would be introduced during the lifetime of Shaikh ^cIsā.³ The Government of India concurred, and Gaskin officially notified Shaikh ^cIsā on 12 February 1901 that the Government of India had recognised Hamad as his successor.⁴

1 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, 2 July 1900, No. 185, L/P & S/7/134, register No. 751.

2 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Kemball, 17 September 1900, No. 1851, E.A., L/P & S/7/134, register No. 751.

3 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 24 December 1900, L/P & S/7/129, register No. 214.

4 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Kemball, 17 January 1901, L/P & S/7/129, register No. 214.

The British representatives in the Gulf were soon faced with a problem which threatened to worsen Anglo-Bahraini relations by increasing the dissatisfaction of Shaikh ^CIsā with British protection for his subjects, involving once again the unwillingness of the Turks to respond to British representations on behalf of Bahrainis who had suffered injury at the hands of those who were supposedly under Ottoman jurisdiction.

On 3 December 1900, Shaikh Salīm b. Du^Caij, a cousin of Shaikh ^CIsā and a person of influence in Bahrain, with his son, his nephew and 23 followers, were attacked and murdered by bedouins belonging to the Bahaiḥ section of the Āl Murra tribe. The reason for this attack was that the Āl Khalīfa of Bahrain had given protection to a fugitive who had a blood feud with the Āl Murra. The murders took place on territory under Turkish jurisdiction, the Hasā mainland, where Salīm and his followers had gone, in accordance with his usual custom at this time of year, on a hunting expedition.¹ This incident created a sensation in Bahrain and was naturally a matter of great concern to Shaikh ^CIsā who was bound by Arab custom to seek retribution on behalf of his relatives.²

In June 1901 the Shaikh asked for permission "to arrange with some friendly Arabs on the mainland" to attack a party of Bahaiḥ opportunely nearby so that the murder of Shaikh Salīm could thereby be avenged.

1 Memorandum by A.C. Wratislaw, British Consul, Basra, 28 December 1900, L/P & S/10/91, register No. 1511, p. 59; 'Administration Report', 1900-01, p. 5; M.A. Daud, 'British Relations with the Persian Gulf, 1890-1902', Ph.D. (London, 1957), II, 302.

2 Shaikh ^CIsā to the Commandant and Agent to the mutasarriif of Najd, 3 March 1901, L/P & S/10/91, register No. 1511.

Gaskin replied that such proceedings would be "most displeasing to the Government of India" and would jeopardize the negotiations which were going on with the Turks about this question. The Shaikh of Bahrain was "strictly prohibited from undertaking operations beyond the limits of his own territory".¹

Gaskin had to admit that the Turkish authorities in Hasā had taken no steps towards bringing the murderers of Shaikh Salīm to justice though they appeared to be within reach of these authorities. In fact, reported the Agent, the inactivity of the Turks in the affair was creating "a bad impression abroad" and Shaikh ^cIsā was therefore anxious that further pressure should be brought to bear by the British Government on the Porte.²

When news of the massacre had first reached Bushire, the wālī of Basra had been approached for redress by A.C. Wratislaw, the British Consul. The wālī had been quite "nonchalant" about the matter, remarking that "after all the matter was merely an act of reprisal for a previous crime committed by natives of Bahrain". Wratislaw had had to explain to the wālī that this was not the case since the previous murder had been paid for in the customary manner by Shaikh ^cIsā and could not be quoted as justification for the assassination of Shaikh Salīm.³ The Consul "observed with regret an entire inability on the part of the Ottoman authorities" to realise the importance of the affair.

1 Gaskin to Kemball, 30 June 1901, L/P & S/7/135, register No. 946.

2 Gaskin to Kemball, 30 June 1901, L/P & S/7/135, register No. 946.

3 Wratislaw to O'Connor, 15 June 1901, L/P & S/3/384, register No. 2205.

The British Government would not let pass unpunished the wholesale murder of persons under their protection and the Turks would have no grounds for complaint if others were "forced to intervene to perform a duty which they themselves have neglected".¹ The British seemed to be impotent in this matter. The wālī of Basra had standing orders to consider Bahrain a Turkish possession and to ignore the right of British representatives to speak on behalf of Shaikh ^cIsā.² A direct approach to the Ottoman authorities at Constantinople also produced no satisfactory result.³

An alternative suggestion by Kemball to send a gunboat to Qatīf was accordingly accepted. The commander was instructed to inform the Turkish official in charge that he had come to enquire what steps were being taken to arrest the murderers. If the official replied that he knew nothing of the matter, he should be asked to refer it to the mutasarrif of Ḥasā whose reply the commander would await. Kemball believed that no British warship had visited Qatīf for many years. Such a visit might therefore at that time have "a very beneficial effect".⁴

This show of strength failed miserably. The Ottoman officials at Qatīf treated the commander of the gunboat, H.M.S. Sphinx, and Gaskin, who accompanied him, with "marked discourtesy", and no satisfactory reply

1 Wratislaw to the wālī of Basra, 16 July 1901, L/P & S/7/136, register No. 1040.

2 Wratislaw to O'Connor, 29 July 1901, L/P & S/3/385, register No. 2431.

3 O'Connor to Foreign Sec., 27 July 1901, L/P & S/3/384.

4 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 12 August 1901, L/P & S/7/136, register No. 1094.

was received.¹

Apparently the Al Khalifa never received any satisfaction in this matter.² In March 1906 the Home Government finally decided not to "pursue the matter any further so far as the Turkish Government [were] directly concerned". Instead Shaikh ^CIsā should be advised that the remedy lay in his own hands by the exclusion from Bahrain of members of any tribes which were "in a position to exercise pressure upon the Bahiah to induce them to come to a settlement"³, a reference to a suggestion made in August 1905 by the British Agent in Bahrain at the time, Captain F.B. Prideaux. Prideaux had pointed out that the attitude of Shaikh ^CIsā to the bedouin tribes of the mainland was "most weak and unsatisfactory". Every year hundreds of these bedouins crossed over to Bahrain to collect subsidies and 'presents' from the Shaikh. If such visitors were banned from visiting Bahrain "until some suitable treatment had been meted out to the members of their tribes and the other persons whom they harboured, who were known to be Sheikh Esa's enemies, a much more satisfactory condition of affairs would be inaugurated for Bahrein".⁴ However, this line of action did not appeal to the Shaikh, nor was he likely to be able to enforce such a prohibition since his permanent armed followers were so few in number.

Thus the British had once more shown that they were unable to honour their obligation to protect the subjects of Bahrain when they

1 Lansdowne, to O'Connor, 8 April 1902, L/P & S/3/390, register No. 2149.

2 Lorimer, IB, 998.

3 India Office to Govt. of India, 16 March 1906, Secret No. 10, L/P & S/10/91, register No. 952, p. 5.

4 Prideaux to Resident, Bushire, 21 August 1905, No. 279, L/P & S/10/91, register No. 263, p. 23.

ventured into territory claimed by the Turks.¹ The effect on Shaikh ^ḤIsā was predictable: the affair would "inevitably continue to rankle in Sheikh Esa's mind" and would be "periodically brought up by him as a grievance whenever he is in need of an excuse for showing disinclination of his own to act upon our advice in some other matter".²

The prospects for Customs reform in Bahrain made scant progress in 1900 and 1901. Late in 1901, on information from Gaskin that Shaikh ^ḤIsā was "in great financial straits" and intended making some change with a view to increasing his income from the Customs, Kemball went to Bahrain with a view to securing acceptance of a British Director of Customs. The Resident found Shaikh ^ḤIsā as obstructive as ever. He told Kemball he intended to take over the management of the Customs from the banian syndicate, but the Resident had his doubts. As far as the Resident could see, Shaikh ^ḤIsā's financial position would only go from bad to worse since there was no one in Bahrain "sufficiently honest and capable" to manage the Customs in a satisfactory manner.³ Kemball's misgivings proved correct: Shaikh ^ḤIsā, far from taking control of the Customs himself, once more extended the banians' lease which would now run to February 1906.⁴

Whilst these continuing problems were being experienced with the Shaikh of Bahrain, the increasing numbers of foreign nationals in the

1 The issue was resolved by the Anglo-Turkish convention of 1913.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 3 March 1906, No. 497, L/P & S/10/91, register No. 952, p. 3.

33 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 8 November 1901, No. 201, L/P & S/7/141, register No. 170.

4 Govt. of India, F.D. to Sec. of State for India, 2 January 1902, L/P & S/7/141, register No. 170.

Shaikhdoms were presenting the British with issues which demanded decisions. One was the question of whether foreigners should be allowed to obtain property in Bahrain. As early as January 1899, Zwemer, the American missionary, had attempted to obtain in Bahrain "a fit dwelling-place for the use of the missionaries and their families".¹ At that time, because of the controversy caused by allegations that he had been abusing Islam², Zwemer had agreed to make no further attempt to purchase land.³ However, in April 1901, Zwemer again raised the issue. He had enquired whether there were any clauses or provisions in the treaties between the Government of India and the Shaikh of Bahrain which would prevent the sale of property to the mission for a hospital. Kemball replied that he was not aware of the existence of any such clauses or provisions. The position of the Government of India in a matter of this kind between Shaikh ^CIsā and the mission would, he considered, be one of "absolute neutrality".⁴

The Government of India were astonished by Kemball's reply. The Resident's indication that there was no treaty precluding the transfer of property to Zwemer's mission was "clearly incorrect" and that it was therefore "not understood" why he had replied as he did. The Government of India pointed out that, under the agreement of 1892, the Shaikh of Bahrain had bound himself not to transfer any part of his territory save to the British Government. There was, in fact, no

1 Zwemer to Meade, 16 January 1899, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

2 See above, p. 187.

3 Govt. of India, to Sec. of State for India, 22 June 1899, No. 118, L/P & S/7/114, register No. 657.

4 Kemball to Zwemer, 11 May 1901, No. 94, L/P & S/7/133, Register No. 700.

objection to the sale to the mission of a site for a house or hospital if the Shaikh was willing to allow it. However, it would be as well to give publicity to the fact that, under the terms of the 1892 agreement, the Shaikh was prohibited from disposing of any part of his territory to foreigners without the express consent of the British Government.¹

The caution shown by the Government of India received support at the India Office. Sir Alfred Lyall noted that, in his opinion, no general exception to the 1892 agreement could be made in the case of private sales or mortgages such as that proposed in the case of Zwemer's mission, since the British authorities might thereby be obliged, at some time in the future, to permit the penetration into Bahrain of more foreign companies.² The Foreign Office also considered that care needed to be exercised to prevent a precedent being created which would allow foreign interests to gain a foothold in Bahrain. On 19 August 1901, they informed the India Office that, whilst in Zwemer's case, there could be no suspicion of the transfer of sovereignty or administrative rights, as a matter of principle it was desirable that the 1892 agreement should be held to cover all cases in which there existed a suspicion.³

The attention which the India Office paid to the question of the penetration of foreign commercial interests into the Shaikhdom was justified. At about this time there was established in Bahrain a

1 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Kemball, 3 July 1901, L/P & S/7/135, register No. 861.

2 Note by Lyall, 29 July 1901, L/P & S/7/135, register No. 861.

3 Foreign Office to India Office, 19 August 1901, L/P & S/3/384, register No. 2232.

German firm which was soon to play an important part in political events in the island. The firm was that of Robert Wonckhaus, a trader who, in 1897, had established himself in the mother-of-pearl traffic in the Gulf and who resided at Lingah. Gradually his interests had extended to general export and import trade between the Gulf and Germany.¹

In December 1900, Kemball informed the Government of India that Wonckhaus intended opening a branch of his business at Bahrain. The Resident suggested that, in the event of any mercantile or other cases arising between subjects of Shaikh ^CIsā and Wonckhaus or his agent at Bahrain, Gaskin should be asked to deal with these cases as if they were cases between British subjects and Bahrainis. The Government of India pointed out that, since Wonckhaus was a foreigner and not a protected person, Gaskin could not claim any jurisdiction in such cases. Foreigners who were not protected persons "must be regarded as liable, in such cases, to the jurisdiction of the Sheikh". Having stated the strict legal position, however, the Government of India hastened to add that the Shaikh was "bound under treaty" not to admit the consular agencies of other nations without the consent of the British Government. It was therefore expedient that the British Agent should, "as a matter of courtesy", extend his good offices to European foreigners in any disputes between them and the subjects of the Shaikh. Moreover, if necessary, the Agent should "claim to protect all such foreigners as he

1 For Wonckhaus's commercial activities in the Gulf see Busch, op. cit., pp. 353-54, also Jens B. Plass, England zwischen Russland und Deutschland, 1899-1907 (Hamburg, 1966), pp. 395-410 and report of C.E. Akers of the Board of Trade, March 1909, L/P & S/3/449, register No. 3285.

would a British subject".¹

Evidently the Government of India were being forced to manoeuvre in a situation which was made difficult for them by their weak legal position regarding internal jurisdiction in Bahrain. In reporting their proceedings to the India Office on 9 May 1901, they observed that matters as they stood were unsatisfactory and the arrangements were not likely to prove permanent. The Government of India accurately predicted that, "in proportion as the subjects of foreign Powers settle in Bahrein for purposes of trade, so will cases that raise the question of the nature and extent of the British protectorate become frequent and perhaps troublesome". It should accordingly be considered "whether some steps should not be taken at an early date to place our position in Bahrein upon a more assured and definite footing".²

The India Office was not as ready as Lord Curzon to take such pre-emptive action. Whilst approving of the action taken by the Government of India on the specific question of Wonckhaus, the India Office considered that no diplomatic steps needed to be taken to place Britain's position in Bahrain on a more definite footing. The India Office, in justification of their attitude, referred to the terms of the Exclusive Agreement of 1880, the British recognition of Shaikh Hamad and the number of occasions on which the Turks and others had been told

1 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Kemball, 4 May 1901, L/P & S/7/133, register No. 614. Both the India Office and the Foreign Office approved these instructions. See Foreign Office to India Office, 13 June 1901, L/P & S/3/383 and Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 21 June 1901, Secret No. 16, L/P & S/3/383.

2 Govt. of India, to Sec. of State for India, 9 May 1901, No. 72, Curzon Papers, F.111/531, item 43.

that Shaikh ^cIsā was under British protection.¹ In their reply to the Government of India, the India Office merely referred to the deadlocked issue of Customs reform as a means of strengthening the authority of the Government of India in Bahrain.²

Only a few months later the Customs arrangements of Bahrain became an object of attention from quite another quarter. In August 1901 a steamer belonging to the Persian Government arrived at Manāma. On board was a Belgian director of the Persian Customs, which were undergoing reform as a means of relieving financial pressure on the Persian Treasury, under the guidance of Belgian experts.³ This was of particular concern to Lord Curzon who always considered the Belgians to be Britain's "most dangerous opponents in Persia".⁴ Curzon, in fact, felt so strongly about the dangers created by control over the Customs of Gulf ports by foreign powers that he told Brodrick in March 1900, "we cannot allow the customs of any Gulf port to be handed over to or collected by any agent of a foreign power".⁵

The Belgian expert, Monsieur Simais, had informed Shaikh ^cIsā that he had been deputed by the Shah to obtain his consent to the placing of two Persian officials in Bahrain. These officials would examine the seals placed on cargoes in the hatches of steamers at the

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 7 June 1901, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2063.

2 India Office to Govt. of India, 21 June 1901, Secret No. 16, L/P & S/3/383.

3 See Percy Sykes, A History of Persia (3rd Edition) (London, 1969), II, 376-77.

4 Curzon to Brodrick, 21 November 1903, Midleton Papers, Add 50075, pp. 39-48. It was considered that the Belgian customs management facilitated the advancement of Russian interests.

5 Curzon to Brodrick, 29 March 1900, Midleton Papers, Add 50073, pp. 304-11.

last Persian port and re-seal them when the steamers left Bahrain. Simais told Gaskin that, if Shaikh ^CIsā refused the Shah's request, ships calling at Bahrain would be repelled from Persian ports. Kemball told Gaskin that there was no need for the Shaikh to send any reply to the Belgian and that Persian officials must not be allowed into Bahrain. The Resident proposed that the British Minister at Tehran, Sir Arthur Hardinge, should be asked to protest strongly against communication having been made by Simais directly to Shaikh ^CIsā. The status of Bahrain, said Kemball, was well known and any communication the Persian Government wished to make with the Shaikh should be made through the British Minister at Tehran. The question of sealing cargo holds at Bahrain also affected British interests and the British Government had a right to demand to be consulted before any new arrangement was introduced. Lastly, Kemball observed, great secrecy had been observed with regard to the visit of the Persian vessel to Bahrain.¹

After Hardinge had delivered his protest against this attempt to induce Shaikh ^CIsā "to accept [a] Persian Customs House", he reported that both the Grand Vizier and the Minister of Customs at Tehran, Mr. Naus, had expressed astonishment at the report of the visit, of which they claimed to know nothing. The Grand Vizier had expressed his regret at the incident.²

In the following year, the attention of the Government of India

1 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 September 1901, L/P & S/7/137, register No. 1121; Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Kemball, 4 September 1901 (tel.), L/P & S/7/137.

2 Hardinge to Govt. of India and Bushire, 6 September 1901, tel. No. 47, L/P & S/3/385.

was drawn to a more subtle attempt by a European power to infiltrate Britain's position at Bahrain through the presence there of one of its nationals. On 7 July 1902, Kemball reported that a Russian professor named Bogayavlensky, who was said to be interested in research into marine zoology, had visited Bahrain in May. Whilst there he had been provided with accommodation by Muhammad b.^cAbdul Wahāb. On his departure, Bogayavlensky had been presented with a blood mare by one of the Āl Khalīfa Shaikhs.¹ During the following year, the Acting Russian Consul-General at Bushire, M. Gabriel Owseenko, wrote a "friendly letter" to Shaikh ^cĪsā thanking him for the hospitality which the Shaikh had extended to the professor during his stay in Bahrain.² When this communication was passed on to Gaskin, he observed that, in his opinion, "the real reason" for the letter had been "a desire to establish a friendly correspondence with the Chief which he may consider would be of use to his Government hereafter".³

This incident is instructive not only in illustrating the sensitivity of the British with regard to direct contact between Shaikh ^cĪsā and foreign Powers, but also because of the scrutiny to which the increasing numbers of European nationals visiting Bahrain were subject. In 1902 one of these foreign nationals, the German trader Robert Wonckhaus, became the object of the particular attention of the Government of India. In July Wonckhaus leased a building in Bahrain for a term of five years. Wonckhaus informed Gaskin that there was a

1 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 7 July 1902, L/P & S/7/147, register No. 1123.

2 Owseenko to Shaikh ^cĪsā, 18 May 1903, (translation), L/P & S/7/156, register No. 1168.

3 Gaskin to Captain Vere de V. Hunt, First Asst. to the Resident, Bushire, 4 July 1903, L/P & S/7/156, register No. 1168.

clause in the contract to the effect that, in the event of the landlord wishing to dispose of the house at the end of the lease, the trader had the option of buying it. The building occupied the best site in Bahrain for commercial purposes and Gaskin considered that, if Wonckhaus's business transactions proved successful, there was every reason to believe that he would try to acquire the property. Gaskin reported that Wonckhaus had told him that, in the event of his buying property in Bahrain, such property "would come under the extra-territorial rights usually exercised by the German Government in the dominions of Muhammadan rulers". What this meant was that, if Wonckhaus secured the property, he would be claiming that it would be outside the jurisdiction of the Shaikh of Bahrain. Gaskin told the trader in reply that Shaikh ^CIsā had "a treaty" with the British Government to the effect that he was not to sell land to foreigners without British consent. Moreover, when permission was given, it was "understood that such lands or property shall remain under the local law". Wonckhaus, however, retorted that Persian and Turkish subjects had acquired land in Bahrain without any reference having been made to the British Government. Gaskin had pointed out that, such persons being amenable to Muslim law in their own countries, they were bound to come under the same law by which immovable property was governed in Bahrain. It was possible that, as a result of this exchange, Wonckhaus, who had gone to Bushire, would raise the question with the German Consul there.¹

As if this were not enough Mr. S. Dods, an Assistant of Messrs. Hotz and Co. of Bushire, a concern which enjoyed Russian protection,

¹ Gaskin to Kemball, 30 November 1902, No. 246, L/P & S/7/154, register No. 845.

informed Gaskin that his firm would probably start business in Bahrain in early 1903. The Government of India had already directed that British good offices should be extended to European traders and their employees in Bahrain, but this appeared to be insufficient to prevent foreign consuls from intervening on behalf of their subjects in the Shaikhdom. In view of the desire of the Russian Government to obtain a footing in the Gulf and their policy of harming British prestige wherever they could, Gaskin suggested, it was possible that the Government might attempt to make the presence of this firm an excuse for interfering in the affairs of Bahrain. In order to prevent the possibility of such embarrassments occurring in the future, it would be desirable to adopt "some definite policy" regarding the question of the relations of the subjects of European powers with the Shaikh of Bahrain.¹

Kemball observed that no reasonable objection could be taken to Germans or other foreigners hiring premises in Bahrain for legitimate business purposes. However, the British authorities certainly could not "view with equanimity the establishment of direct dealings between foreign Consular officers and the Chief of Bahrein". Kemball therefore suggested taking the opportunity of impressing this on Shaikh ^ḤIsā who could also be warned that, if a foreign Consul attempted to correspond directly with him, it was expected that he would decline to enter into such correspondence and would refer the Consul to the British authorities. As far as the firm of Messrs. Hotz and Co. was concerned, Kemball observed that whilst they might be under Russian protection in Persia, this could not give them the right to enjoy Russian protection in Bahrain, which was not under Persian jurisdiction.²

1 Ibid.

2 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, 13 December 1902, No. 175, L/P & S/7/154, register No. 845.

On 2 June 1903, the Government of India concurred with the Resident's proposals, and instructed Kemball to have it explained to Wonckhaus that, as the proposed purchase was "a case of private ownership pure and simple by a private party", there was no objection to it. However, Wonckhaus should certainly be informed that there were no German courts with local jurisdiction in Bahrain, and his property would be amenable to local law. Lastly, the Government of India asked Kemball to report immediately any attempt by Messrs. Hotz and Co. to establish a branch of their business in Bahrain.¹

The wary attitude of the Government of India to penetration of foreign business interests in Bahrain should be seen as part of the larger patterns of activity of Britain's imperial rivals in the Gulf area and elsewhere in the previous few years. From 1900 to 1902 Britain was greatly embarrassed by the failure to achieve an easy victory over the Boers in South Africa, and France, Russia and Germany had taken advantage of this.² In and around the Gulf, the French were active particularly in Muscat, while the Russians appeared to be attempting to acquire a naval base or fortified port and railway terminus, with a view to challenging British naval supremacy in partnership with the French. French and Russian warships called at Gulf ports, and the visit of the Russian professor to Bahrain was merely one of several made by Russians to other coastal towns, from Kuwait to the southern Persian islands. But by 1903 conditions had changed for the British, and this

1 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, to Kemball, 2 June 1903, L/P & S/7/154, register No. 845.

2 Lord Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon (London, 1928), II, 310; Ward and Gooch, op. cit., III, 320; Kazemzadeh, op. cit., pp. 438-40 and 441.

year produced two important public demonstrations of British resolve to defend their position in the Gulf against such manoeuvres. The Prime Minister, Balfour, and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, were more disposed to the necessity for active measures than Lord Salisbury had been. Moreover, the end of the South African war and the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 had restored some freedom of diplomatic action. A Franco-Russian visit to Kuwait in March 1903 coincided with the Turkish incorporation of the Baghdad Railway Company, presenting the British with the future prospect of a base at the head of the Gulf under German or Russian control. On 5 May, Lansdowne declared in the House of Lords that Britain would not exclude the legitimate trade of other powers from the Gulf, but

... we should regard the establishment of a naval base, or of a fortified port, in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal.¹

This warning to Britain's rivals delighted Curzon, who soon secured approval for a bold move of his own. In November 1903 the Viceroy made a tour of the Gulf. His main object, he subsequently declared, was to show by his own presence "the intention of His Majesty's Government to maintain their political and commercial ascendancy in those waters". Part of the Viceroy's programme involved Bahrain. He spent two days in the harbour at Manāma. Curzon afterwards reported to the Secretary of State for India that the "increasing prosperity" of Bahrain, which appeared to be "capable of very considerable further development", was due "exclusively to the British

1 Gooch and Temperley, IV, 371; G.W. Moger, The End of Isolation (London, 1963), pp. 118-23; Busch, op. cit., pp. 222, 255-7; C.J. Lowe and M.L. Dockrill, The Mirage of Power (London and Boston, 1972), I, 1-4; Landen, op. cit., pp. 260-66.

Protectorate". This had on many occasions been asserted by the British Government and "admits of no dispute".¹

Whilst at Manāma, Curzon had an interview with Shaikh ^CIsā. The most important matter raised was the question of the administration of the Customs. At first, Shaikh ^CIsā dismissed the question with the observation that it was a private matter which, he trusted, the Viceroy would leave him to manage in his own way. When Curzon persisted, the Shaikh became very obstinate but "could not when pressed offer any reason against the reform". When he asked for the matter to be postponed during his lifetime, Curzon had pointed out that he was only fifty-seven years of age and that his uncle and predecessor, Shaikh Muhammad, had lived to be over eighty. Eventually, Shaikh ^CIsā said that he would consider the subject with his sons and brother. Curzon, however, warned that the matter could not be dropped and that Kemball would be instructed to report, after consulting the Shaikh, on what action he would recommend to secure the execution of the reform. The Shaikh, added Curzon finally, "could not enjoy all the advantages of the British Protectorate, to which he owed his position and security, without discharging the obligations which it involved".²

Having intimated to Shaikh ^CIsā that the indefinite postponement of the reform of the Customs could not be permitted, Curzon was left with the problem of finding a means of overcoming the obstinacy of the

1 Govt. of India, to Sec. of State for India, 17 December 1903, Secret No. 196, L/P & S/3/404, register No. 1762/63.

2 Note on interview between Viceroy and Shaikh of Bahrain, 27 November 1903, Curzon Papers, F.111/531.

Shaikh over the issue. The instrument which had been chosen for this task had been a change in the standard of British political representation in Bahrain. However, J. Calcott Gaskin had had more than three years to make his influence felt with Shaikh ^ʿIsā, apparently with no positive effect as far as Customs reform was concerned.¹

Not long after returning to India, Curzon also indicated his dissatisfaction with the performance of Gaskin's superior, Colonel Kemball. The Viceroy minuted that the failure to overcome Shaikh ^ʿIsā's obstinacy over the Customs issue was "attributable to the weakness of Colonel Kemball". It was he who had "foolishly advised us to drop the Customs question at the time we were recognizing the son". Kemball's "repeated interviews with the Sheikh were fraught with no consequences: nor indeed was it conceivable that they should have any other result". It was Curzon's opinion that "We shall do nothing at Bahrein until we have different men at Bahrein [sic, presumably Bushire] and Manama". It was necessary first to appoint a "Political Officer" to replace Gaskin. Once the new man was firmly established, "he must take the Customs question in hand. The Chief will know what it means".²

In the event, Kemball was replaced first, in April 1904, by Major Percy Zachariah Cox, who had previously been Political Agent at Muscat. Cox had, in fact, been Curzon's choice when, in 1900, he had been

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- 1 Gaskin had also made an extremely bad impression while acting as interpreter for Curzon's official address to the rulers of the Trucial Coast: Curzon to Brodrick, 21 November 1903, Midleton Papers, Add 50075, pp. 39-48.
 - 2 Minute by Curzon, 19 March 1904, from 'Notes in Secret E., May 1904, Nos. 72-74', quoted in Saldanha, 'Precis of Bahrein Affairs', op. cit., p. 145.

posted to Muscat.¹ When Cox took up his appointment at Bushire, he was convinced of the correctness of Curzon's policy of boldly confronting the challenge by other European powers to British ascendancy in the Gulf.

Kemball submitted a final despatch on the Customs issue in February 1904. Since Curzon's visit to Bahrain in November 1903, Kemball had interviewed Shaikh ^ḤIsā about the Customs. Obstinate as ever, Shaikh ^ḤIsā had informed Kemball that he had definitely made up his mind, that he and his family did not approve of any change being made. Kemball considered that his attitude was "probably due to his ignorant dread that his submission in the matter will mean, or will at least be considered by his subjects and neighbours to mean, the end of his independence". It was also, thought Kemball, due to the Shaikh's "reluctance to abolish a system whereby he can always obtain advances in time of need".

Kemball had expected that the Shaikh would not give way. If it was decided that, even so, the existing system of Customs management was to be abolished, it would be necessary to obtain the services of some officials trained in Customs work, as no Bahraini was capable of doing the job efficiently. If the leases of the banians were cancelled then the Government of India should pay off the Shaikh's debts to the syndicate, a sum of about Rs. 212,000. This amount might then be treated as a loan to the Shaikh and paid off from the Customs revenue. Kemball advocated warning the banians that they must not

¹ Lovat Fraser, India under Curzon and After (London, 1911), p. 89.

make any further advances to the Shaikh or make any further contracts for the lease of the Customs beyond the period of their existing leases. Kemball said that, although he did not anticipate any active opposition when the new system of Customs management was introduced, nevertheless a warship should be stationed at Bahrain when the change was made and for some time afterwards. Further, it might be advisable to provide a guard of about twenty-five sepoy as an escort for the Assistant Political Agent at Bahrain.¹

After more than six years of discussion, customs reform at Bahrain seemed at last to be moving towards a decisive phase. On 21 April 1904, the Government of India wrote to the Secretary of State on the affairs of Bahrain and the arrangements for British representation at Manāma. The situation, they declared, was "peculiar". British protection had made of the Shaikhdum "a peaceful and flourishing centre of industry and commerce". The stability of the rule of Shaikh ^CIsā had been secured by Britain. Yet, "we have never declared a formal protectorate; we have demanded no tribute; and we have abstained from interference in domestic affairs, except at the Sheikh's request". Unfortunately, security had bred in Shaikh ^CIsā no sense of gratitude to his British protectors. British "moderation" seemed to have "induced the belief in the Chief's mind that his relations with the British Government" were "of a kind that involve no corresponding obligations on his own part". The "incorrectness of the Sheikh's attitude" had been "conspicuously noticeable in connection with the question of his Customs revenues". This had become "a test case of

¹ Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 18 February 1904, No. 38, L/P & S/7/164, register No. 871.

the nature and degree of the influence which the British Government may reasonably claim to exercise over the ruler of those islands". It would be a simple matter to coerce the Shaikh. However, "forcible measures would be liable to arouse unnecessary suspicion and alarm as to our intentions in the Gulf". It was therefore preferable to effect the British objective by other, admittedly slower, means. The Government of India therefore proposed that an officer of the graded list of their Political Department should replace Gaskin. To "emphasise the change", a small guard of sepoy should be sent as permanent escort to the new Agent. Shaikh ^CIsā would "probably not be slow to recognise the significance of the action" and it would "not be long before a suitable officer" was able to secure "a proper influence over the Sheikh and to find an opportunity of bringing pressure to bear on him in connection with the Customs question or any other matter". The Government of India concluded that the need for "a more definite assertion of our position has recently come into greater prominence owing to the establishment of a German trader on the island" and because of "the growing interest in this quarter displayed by foreigners of other nationalities".¹

At this time, a renewal of French interest in Bahrain was apparent. On 6 and 14 September 1903, a certain M. Jouanin had visited Shaikh ^CIsā to ascertain his feelings about the establishment of a French bank in Bahrain. On the latter occasion Jouanin had been accompanied by the notorious Goguyer, whom Lord Curzon regarded as a "blackguard".² Shaikh ^CIsā told Gaskin that he had told the

1 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 21 April 1904, No. 85, Curzon Papers, F.111/531, item 46.

2 Curzon to Brodrick, 21 November 1903, Midleton Papers, Add 50075, pp. 39-48.

Frenchmen that there was no need for a bank in Bahrain. Later, Gaskin had discovered from Jouanin himself that the concession he was hoping to obtain in Bahrain included permission to administer the Customs of the Island. Gaskin declared that it was "obvious that if such a charter were to be given to Monsieur Jouanin it would be disastrous to our policy, trade and the future of Bahrein".¹ The Resident instructed Gaskin to tell Jouanin, if he referred to it again, that he understood that Shaikh ^CIsā did not wish a bank opened at Bahrain.²

A few months later the French Government proposed to the British Government that Bahrain should be included within the area of the French Vice-Consulate at Bushire. The reason given was that French subjects had come to Bahrain to establish themselves and to carry on pearl fishing. Secretary of State Brodrick was willing to agree on condition that any representations by the French Vice-Consul would be addressed not to Shaikh ^CIsā, who had placed his foreign relations in British hands, but to the British Agent on the island.³

However, the new Resident at Bushire, Cox, reacted quite differently. The participation of French merchants in the pearl fisheries and the proposed jurisdiction of the French Vice-Consul would mean the presence of a French warship on the pearl banks to protect the vessels and equipment of French subjects. Cox was in favour of informing the French Government that the foreign relations of Bahrain

1 Gaskin to Captain Vere de V. Hunt, Bushire, 21 September 1903, No. 212, L/P & S/7/159, register No. 1571.

2 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 October 1903, No. 180, L/P & S/7/159, register No. 1571.

3 Brodrick to Lord Ampthill, Viceroy, 17 August 1904, tel. No. 265, Curzon Papers, F.111/174, item 265.

were in British hands and that the good offices of the Political Agent and equality of treatment with British subjects could be offered to French subjects. Moreover, in view of the engagements of the Shaikh of Bahrain with the British Government and the fact that the French had never previously had any commercial treaty with Bahrain, the French Government should be told that there were objections to bringing the Shaikhdom within the sphere of a French consulate. Cox also pointed out that it had always been a fundamental principle of British policy in the Gulf that Arab pearling rights should be immune from foreign intrusion, even from British firms using modern methods. Various other unwelcome developments might follow. For one thing, acquiescence in the placing, by the French, of Bahrain under the jurisdiction of Bushire might "indirectly cause the Persian Government to revive their old claim to right over the island". Moreover, any concessions granted to the French would forthwith be claimed by the German Consul in favour of Herr Wonckhaus and, doubtless, the Russian Consul would follow suit. Cox ended his telegram by recommending that, if a resolute line of action was decided on by the British Government, Shaikh ^CIsā should be informed about French aspirations and should be told that the only way he could be "effectively helped by us is by the establishment of a formal British protectorate which must include control over his Customs, which must be forthwith taken over by us".¹

The Government of India hoped that the French Government would soon drop their proposal. However, if the India Office insisted on

¹ Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 August 1904 (tel.), L/P & S/7/169, register No. 1754.

immediate action the Government of India recommended that recognition of the French Vice-Consul at Manāma should only be agreed to on certain conditions: he should obtain his exequatur from the British Government; he should have dealings only with the British Agent; and, he should acquire no extra-territorial jurisdiction, but, that, as had been contemplated in the case of Wonckhaus, the British Agent should exercise his good offices.¹

It seems possible that the greater willingness of the authorities in London to accommodate French pretensions in the Gulf may have been connected with the British Government's move at this time towards the Entente with France. The agreement over outstanding worldwide Anglo-French Colonial differences in April 1904 also reinforced the desire to come to a similar accommodation with Russia.² This would have to await the outcome of the war which had broken out early in 1904 between Russia and Japan, but prospects of such developments would obviously affect the position of the Gulf in international diplomacy. The British had increased their watchfulness at Bahrain since 1896 as a result of European rivalries in the area, and now the rivalries were gradually changing. Against this uncertain background, the India Office sanctioned the appointment of an officer of the graded list of the Political Department to replace Gaskin, with a permanent escort of sepoys.³ Could the new Agent accomplish the customs reform which had eluded Gaskin? Just before the new Agent took up his post, there

1 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 1 September 1904 (tel.), L/P & S/7/168, register No. 1754.

2 Ward and Gooch, op. cit., III, 305-18; Monger, op. cit., pp. 104-96; Lowe and Dockrill, op. cit., I, 1-28.

3 Sec. of State for India, to Viceroy, 5 August 1904, Secret No. 33, Curzon Papers, F.111/531, item 53.

occurred a crisis at Bahrain involving another issue, the responsibility for jurisdiction over non-British foreigners. This brought Anglo-Bahraini relations to a turning point in the course of 1904-05.

CHAPTER 5

THE DISTURBANCES OF 1904-05 IN BAHRAIN

The disturbances of 1904-05 in Bahrain involved acts of violence committed by Bahraini citizens against foreign nationals residing in the Shaikhdom. If the incidents had occurred even ten years earlier it is almost certain that they would have been regarded by the British as relatively trivial. However, since they occurred at a time when the issue of British control over the Shaikhdom was coming to a critical stage, they proved to be very far from unimportant.

As explained above, the British were by 1904-05 extremely sensitive about the extent to which their position of dominance in the Gulf had come to be challenged by one European Power after another. As the British had become more anxious about the extent to which the Gulf was becoming an arena of international rivalry, they had also become more watchful for opportunities to increase their control over protected Shaikhs like ^CIsā of Bahrain. This was especially so in Shaikh ^CIsā's case. ^CIsā had become aware of British designs on his Shaikhdom and had shown a tendency to engage in manoeuvres with the aim of holding onto his customary freedom of action. This manoeuvring in turn had only made the British more intent on seizing any opportunity to tighten their control. When the disturbances of 1904-05 presented such an opportunity, the British took it, though not without careful consideration of the consequences.

The disturbances of 1904-05 were a result of the actions of the followers of Shaikh Ali b. Ahmad, the nephew of Shaikh ^CIsā. As

explained above, Shaikh Ali, who was Governor of Manāma, had ambitions to become ruler of Bahrain. He was therefore viewed with great suspicion and disfavour by Shaikh ʿĪsā. Shaikh ʿĪsā's fear of his nephew was by no means entirely removed by British recognition of his son Hamad as successor. Ali was still a powerful figure in Bahrain, having inherited valuable trading interests from his father. He also had a number of followers and sympathisers, including two Sunni mullahs of Manāma.

In 1899 the quarrel between Ali and his uncle had been temporarily settled by means of a family council. However, at the beginning of 1904, after the formal recognition of Shaikh Hamad as successor-designate had taken place, the quarrel broke out afresh. Manāma became the scene of all kinds of excesses committed by ruffians whom Shaikh Ali had collected.¹

The Assistant Political Agent in Bahrain, Gaskin, was well aware of the tension existing between Shaikh Ali and Shaikh ʿĪsā. Early in May 1904 Gaskin suggested that the Government of India should declare its support for Shaikh ʿĪsā at a durbar in Bahrain, as a means of counteracting the annoyances Ali and his partisans were continually causing. The Resident, Major Cox, supported Gaskin's idea, knowing that sooner or later another attempt would be made to coerce Shaikh ʿĪsā over the Customs issue and that Gaskin's suggestion might make Shaikh ʿĪsā more amenable.² The Government of India felt that the

1 Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Vice-royalty of Lord Curzon, Part I - The Persian Gulf, Confidential (Simla, 1906), p. 65, Curzon Papers, F.111/390.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 19 May 1904, No. 136, L/P & S/7/166, register No. 1299.

matter was not urgent, and could await "a decision on the question of the arrangements for our future representation at Bahrein".¹ Within three months of these instructions, Shaikh Ali's supporters had caused an embarrassing incident involving the German trading community of Bahrain.

The chief figure in this community was Robert Wonckhaus, who had established a branch of his business in Bahrain in 1901. Apparently Wonckhaus had failed to secure the good will of the Āl Khālīfa, probably because he had no intention of satisfying financial demands which he regarded as illegitimate. Wonckhaus had particularly made an enemy of Shaikh Ali: since Wonckhaus possessed his own fleet of cargo boats, Ali was not included in any of the German's business transactions.

In these circumstances it was natural for Wonckhaus to look to the British authorities for protection. One of his most frequent complaints to the Assistant Political Agent had concerned the Bahraini practice of sukhra², the system of forced labour or corvee. It had long been the custom of the Āl Khālīfa shaikhs to levy sukhra from those of their subjects who belonged to the lower classes.³ On British instructions the Shaikh had banned its application to coolies employed by Europeans. Even so, it is clear that there was a real

1 Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 30 June 1904, No. 2067 E.A., L/P & S/7/166.

2 Wonckhaus to F.B. Prideaux, Asst. Political Agent, Bahrain, 30 October 1904, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Prideaux to Wonckhaus, 28 October 1904, No. 248, L/P & S/10/81.

clash of opinion between Bahrainis and Europeans on the island about the legitimacy of the use of sukhra.¹ The bad relations between Wonckhaus and Shaikh Ali reached a crisis over this question, in an incident on 29 September 1904, when a coolie employed by Wonckhaus's firm refused to work sukhra to unload a boat belonging to Shaikh Ali. The coolie fled to the firm's house for protection. ^cAbdallah, a native clerk employed by Wonckhaus, informed a servant of Shaikh Ali where the coolie was taking refuge, adding that if Shaikh Ali needed help he could himself ask Herr Wonckhaus. Ali's servant considered the clerk's reply to be an insult. Apparently, Shaikh Ali was in the habit of taking rather than asking for what he wanted. Soon the servant and the clerk were exchanging blows, but they were quickly separated by a German assistant of Wonckhaus called Bahnson.

Shaikh Ali came quickly to Wonckhaus's premises with a number of his followers. Saying that ^cAbdallah had beaten his servant, Shaikh Ali began, with the assistance of his followers, to beat the unresisting ^cAbdallah. In an attempt to protect ^cAbdallah, Bahnson himself was injured although Shaikh Ali pretended to offer his protection.

Wonckhaus, who was absent at the time of the incident, hurried back on receiving news of it. Finding Shaikh Ali still on the premises, Wonckhaus immediately sent for Gaskin, asking Shaikh Ali to wait. However, Shaikh Ali decided to leave, informing Wonckhaus that, if Gaskin needed him, he would be at home.

¹ Gaskin to C.A. Kemball, Resident, Bushire, 30 November 1902, L/P & S/7/154, register No. 845; C.E. Akers to Board of Trade, London, March 1909, L/P & S/3/449, register No. 3285; Plass, England zwischen Russland und Deutschland, 1899-1907, (pp. 395-410); Busch, op. cit., p. 148; Lorimer, IB, pp. 938-42; Graves, op. cit., p. 98.

The German merchant considered the incident to be a very serious one. He impressed on Gaskin that the British authorities should ensure that such incidents did not recur, and stipulated that certain conditions should be met before a settlement could be acceptable. Firstly, the assailants should be publicly beaten with Bahnson present as a witness. Secondly, those responsible for the assault should pay Bahnson Rs. 1,000 in compensation. Thirdly, sukhra should be entirely prohibited for employees of Europeans.¹

Gaskin conducted an enquiry into the affair. After interviewing both parties he became convinced that Shaikh Ali and his followers were to blame for the injury caused to Bahnson. Nevertheless, he felt that the real responsibility for the incident rested on the deterioration of law and order in Bahrain; the corrupt practice of sukhra; and the weakness of the ruler, Shaikh ^CIsā. In his view, there would have been no such trouble if Bahrain had been under a better administration.² Gaskin clearly had in mind the idea that the unsatisfactory state of internal administration could easily be taken by foreign Powers as an indictment of British supervision of the Shaikhdom.

Although he was about to leave Bahrain, Gaskin protested strongly to Shaikh ^CIsā and demanded the punishment and expulsion of the assailants as well as the payment of the Rs. 1,000 compensation. Shaikh ^CIsā was by no means disinclined to see Shaikh Ali and his followers punished. However matters were not so simple. Shaikh

1 Wonckhaus to Gaskin, 29 September 1904; Shaikh Ali to Shaikh ^CIsā, 29 September 1904, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Gaskin to Cox, 1 October 1904, No. 225, L/P & S/10/81.

Ḥīsā was known by the British authorities in Bahrain to be "a little afraid" of Shaikh Ali.¹ Moreover, Shaikh Ḥīsā had to take into account the likely reaction of the other members of the Āl Khalīfa ruling family to the indignity of such punishment. Finally, on matters such as sukhra, Shaikh Ḥīsā's views were the same as Shaikh Ali's.² Shaikh Ḥīsā might wish to take advantage of any embarrassment of Shaikh Ali, but sukhra was not the best issue to exploit.

Gaskin's complaint was dismissed with the reply that the Shaikh, in his good time, would have an enquiry conducted into the case. However, on 1 October 1904, Shaikh Ḥīsā wrote to Major Cox concerning the incident, enclosing a petition from Ali presenting his version of the incident. It is significant that Shaikh Ḥīsā was handing over the case to the Resident at Bushire to deal with. In the past, British Residents had trusted Shaikh Ḥīsā's rulings in such local incidents and such a departure from custom was a sign of the extent to which the British had increased their power over the Shaikhdom.³

The acting Resident, Captain A.P. Trevor, Cox's First Assistant at Bushire, wired the information to the new Assistant Political Agent who was en route to Bahrain to replace Gaskin. The replacement,

1 Ibid. See also Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, Part I, The Persian Gulf, Confidential (Simla, 1906), p. 65, Curzon Papers, F.111/390.

2 Prideaux to Cox, 31 October 1904, No. 252, L/P & S/10/81. In fact in November 1904, a servant of Shaikh Ḥamad, Shaikh Ḥīsā's eldest son, attempted to abduct one of Wonckhaus's coolies for sukhra. Wonckhaus to Prideaux, 5 November 1904, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Ḥīsā to Cox, 1 October 1904, L/P & S/10/81.

F.B. Prideaux, was to try and effect a settlement with the help of Shaikh ^cIsā. If he was unable to do so, he should report his findings and state whether or not he concurred with Gaskin's recommendations for punishment.¹ At the same time, Trevor urged Shaikh ^cIsā, "in the interests of all concerned", to consult with Britain's new representative in his Shaikhdom and endeavour to bring about a speedy settlement.²

The new Assistant Political Agent was in a most difficult position. Prideaux was responsible for settling a case involving an incident which had occurred before he had arrived in Bahrain. Naturally, he was obliged to rely on second-hand information. It was not until later that Prideaux fully appreciated how biased was the information on which he relied for his judgment. Because of this, in October 1904 he arrived at conclusions quite different to those of Gaskin and less unfavourable to Shaikh Ali.³

In the course of his investigation, Prideaux gained the impression that Shaikh Ali was "disloyal" to his uncle. Ali had, for example, offered to solve the Customs issue, on condition that the British Government would help him to recover his father's share in the Government of Bahrain. Acknowledging that it was a grave offence for an Asian to assault a European "without just provocation", Prideaux nevertheless claimed that there had been "errors of judgment

1 Trevor to Prideaux, 7 October 1904 (tel.), L/P & S/10/81.

2 Trevor to Shaikh ^cIsā, 11 October 1904, No. 342, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 December 1904, No. 420, L/P & S/10/81.

and improper actions on both sides". Therefore, he pronounced Gaskin's terms of punishment "unreasonably severe". Prideaux explained to Wonckhaus that sukhra was a long-established feature of life in Bahrain, as in neighbouring Arab states. The practice could not be abolished overnight. To get rid of it needed self-restraint and the "exercise of a good deal of diplomacy". Thus, he suggested to Wonckhaus that an apology from Shaikh Ali and a month's imprisonment for those of his servants involved should suffice. It would appear that Prideaux, at this time under the influence of Shaikh ^CIsā, was reluctant to stir up trouble among his subjects by antagonising Ali and conceding the extreme demands of Wonckhaus.¹

Wonckhaus was extremely displeased by Prideaux's approach. He resented the suggestion that there was blame on both sides, and rejected Prideaux's proposals for a settlement. The German merchant reiterated his argument about the over-bearing manner of the Āl Khalīfa Shaikhs and their servants. If Europeans were to conduct profitable business in Bahrain, Wonckhaus declared, then they needed proper protection. He warned Prideaux that if Shaikh Ali was not fully punished then more European residents in the Shaikhdom would suffer from his turbulence, and declared that, since he was not satisfied with his handling of the case, he was reporting the incident to the German Consul at Bushire for settlement.²

1 Prideaux to Wonckhaus, 28 October 1904, No. 248, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Wonckhaus to Prideaux, 30 October 1904, L/P & S/10/81. Shaikh ^CIsā was induced to tell the German Consul that the affair was a matter for the Protecting Power: see Shaikh ^CIsā to German Consul, Bushire, 7 November 1904, L/P & S/10/81.

Unable to induce Wonckhaus to moderate his demands, Prideaux referred the case to the Resident. The Agent gave his opinion that flogging, the form of punishment favoured by Herr Bahnson, could not be permitted in a country "so much affected by British influence". He also considered that punishing Shaikh Ali or his servants would not help law and order in Bahrain. He felt that better understanding and more time and patience were the solution to the problem. Prideaux realised how difficult it would be for Shaikh ^cĪsā to curtail Ali's power, especially over an incident concerning such an entrenched custom as sukhra.¹ However, another incident now occurred which caused Prideaux to change his whole approach to the solution of the problems of Bahrain.

This second incident also concerned an assault by members of the entourage of Shaikh Ali upon foreign residents, in this case Persians. The Persian Shiite community in Bahrain numbered about 1,500, all of whom worked and lived in Manāma as shopkeepers and artisans. Their numbers had increased with the growth of commercial opportunities.²

The headman of the Persian community was a man called Hajī ^cAbdul Nabī Kazerūnī. ^cAbdul Nabī was employed by Shaikh ^cĪsā as 'Hamal Baschi' or Director of the cargo-landing operations on the wharf, with further responsibility for cargoes in the Customs building. For

1 Prideaux to Cox, 31 October 1904, No. 252; Wonckhaus to Prideaux, 5 November 1904; Prideaux to Shaikh ^cĪsā, 7 November 1904, No. 259; Shaikh ^cĪsā to Prideaux, 10 November 1904; and Prideaux to Wonckhaus, 10 November 1904, No. 220, L/P & S/10/81.

2 'Administration Reports', 1901-02, 1903-04 and 1904-05; Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, 17 December 1904, No. 421, L/P & S/10/81.

this post ^cAbdul Nabī held a contract under Shaikh ^cIsā's wazīr or chief clerk and was considered to be a loyal, honest and hardworking servant of the Shaikh. ^cAbdul Nabī also was a dubasch for the Royal Navy and Indian Marine, supplying their ships whenever they called at Bahrain. In addition, he was the local agent for Gray's Paul and Co., a British trading firm dealing in mother-of-pearl and in competition with Herr Wonckhaus.¹

In July 1904 ^cAbdul Nabī had caught eight followers of Shaikh Ali pilfering from cargoes which were in his charge. The thieves were tried and sentenced to imprisonment, with the result that neither Shaikh Ali nor his entourage had forgiven ^cAbdul Nabī.²

On the evening of 14 November, Ramazān, a Persian employed by ^cAbdul Nabī, accidentally brushed against Marzūq, a Negro servant of Shaikh Ali, in the Manāma bazaar. A fight followed in which Marzūq attacked other Persians who were close by. From a nearby mosque, some Sunni Arab worshippers, instigated by two mullahs, brothers called Qāsim and Ahmad, joined the affray on the side of Marzūq. It was well known in Bahrain that these two brothers were supporters of Shaikh Ali and disaffected towards Shaikh ^cIsā. They were also antagonistic towards British power in Bahrain.³

1 Depositions of Hajī ^cAbdul Nabī b. Kal Ahwāz, Persian subject, enclosure No. 6 in Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 December 1904, No. 421, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, 17 December 1904, No. 421, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Prideaux to Cox, 17 November 1904, No. 270, L/P & S/10/81; Dr. S.J. Thoms, Surgeon at the American Mission to Prideaux, 15 November 1904, L/P & S/10/81.

Shaikh Ali, whose house was nearby, witnessed the fight but took no part in it personally. However, his cousin, Shaikh Du^caij b. Sal^{mān} Āl Khalīfa, who was in Ali's house at the time, joined the assailants. Several Persians were injured in the fracas and the father and brother of Hajī ^cAbdul Nabī, though escaping injury, were badly frightened.¹

Shaikh Ali, who denied any connection with the incident, informed Prideaux that the responsibility for the prevention of such disturbances rested with his uncle. As soon as Shaikh ^cIsā received word of the incident, he sent ^cAbdul Nabī a promise that his wrongs would be righted. The ruler of Bahrain had a vested interest in the presence of hardworking minorities in the Shaikhdom as useful contributors of tax revenue.

Shaikh ^cIsā also calculated that the incident might be used as an opportunity to curb the power of his nephew once and for all, but without losing the good will of the family. Shaikh ^cIsā decided to have the case tried by the Shari^c a court of the Chief Sunni qādī, mullah Qāsim (who had himself been involved in the assault). This was quite in accordance with the law of Bahrain, which stated that, if a Sunni and a Shiite were involved in a dispute then the Sunni Shari^c a court would have jurisdiction in the case. By being forced to rule in favour of the Persians, mullah Qāsim would then incur the hostility of the Āl Khalīfa. As Prideaux remarked, Shaikh ^cIsā only sent cases to mullah Qāsim for settlement when he was anxious to wash his hands of

1 Prideaux to Cox, 17 November 1904, No. 270, L/P & S/10/81.

all connections with them.¹

Prideaux's reaction to the second incident involving Shaikh Ali's supporters was quite different from his handling of the assault on Bahnson. He now realised that he had underestimated the menace posed by Shaikh Ali and his entourage. Prideaux objected that a Sunni Shari^c court was not qualified to do justice to Persians especially when the conduct of two Al Khalifa shaikhs was seriously in question. Prideaux therefore urged Shaikh ^cI^sa to hold the inquiry himself.² Not surprisingly, Shaikh ^cI^sa rejected this suggestion.

Prideaux thereupon requested the despatch of a gunboat for the protection of the minority communities in Bahrain. Prideaux further suggested that Shaikh Ali should be banished from the Shaikhdom for ten years, and that those of Ali's servants implicated in the affair be "soundly flogged", imprisoned and, if no security for their good behaviour was forthcoming, deported. He added that Shaikh ^cI^sa should be informed that future disputes between Sunnis and Shiites would be decided by the Political Agent as was the custom with disputes between Hindus and Muslims.

Prideaux explained his motivation in taking such a strong line by stating that, unless Britain's authority in Bahrain was "unhesitatingly vindicated", their prestige would be lowered not only in the Shaikhdom but along "the entire length of the Arab coast".

1 Prideaux to Cox, 19 November 1904, No. 272, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Prideaux to Cox, 17 November 1904, No. 270, L/P & S/10/81.

Apparently unaware of the threat which his proposed course of action posed to the political status quo in Bahrain, Prideaux gave his opinion that Shaikh ^CIsā could easily be persuaded to acquiesce to his demands. After all, he wrote to Cox, Shaikh ^CIsā would be able to avoid embarrassment from his family by telling them that his actions were "prompted by force majeure".¹

The responsibility for making the next move lay with Cox. In considering the way in which he acted it is important to bear in mind the closeness of his attitude to Gulf affairs to that of Lord Curzon (see Chapter 4). Cox considered that foreign commercial and political encroachments in the Gulf were a serious threat to Britain's position in Bahrain. He assumed that the time was now appropriate for meeting the increasing foreign competition in the area by transforming Bahrain into a full British protectorate.²

Cox decided that the cases involved an abrogation of the 1892 agreement. A European trader, for whose safety, he felt, the British Government was morally responsible, had been assaulted. Cox was also immediately aware of the possible wider repercussions of the incidents. He noticed that not only had Herr Wonckhaus referred the Bahnson case to the German Consul in Bushire, but also that the second case had been referred to the Mushire-ud-Dowleh (Secretary for Foreign Affairs) of the Persian Government. Those foreign powers which were intent on promoting their interests in the Gulf would, Cox believed, "gain an

1 Prideaux to Cox, 19 November 1904, No. 272, L/P & S/10/81.

2 This point is expanded and documented in Chapter 6.

opening for assailing our regime, if they could show that we could not, or did not, give their subjects effective protection".¹

The gunboat HMS Redbreast and Cox himself in RIMS Laurence arrived at Bahrain by 30 November. Believing that Shaikh Ali's implication in the Bahnson case was "not open to any doubt", Cox decided to proceed first with the settlement of the grievances of the German traders. He asked Shaikh ^CIsā to comply with Gaskin's original demands. The ruler of Bahrain demurred. Apparently Shaikh ^CIsā had been engaged in negotiations with the other members of his family in order to arrive at a solution to the problem of Shaikh Ali which would be acceptable to all concerned. ^CIsā repeatedly attempted to convince Cox that the whole affair was a simple family dispute. The Shaikh expressed the opinion that Shaikh Ali would be "effectively subdued" by Cox giving him a severe talking to in the presence of his uncle and Captain Prideaux. Shaikh ^CIsā assured Cox that he had no fear of Shaikh Ali's machinations during his lifetime, but only after his death.²

Anxious to demonstrate to foreign powers that Bahrain was under firm British control, Cox insisted that the compensation should be paid, the ringleaders of the disturbances flogged and expelled, and that Ali should leave Bahrain pending the receipt of Government approval.

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 December 1904, Nos. 420 and 421, L/P & S/10/81. See also Herr von Mutius, German Consul, Bushire, to Shaikh ^CIsā, 19 October 1904, Shaikh ^CIsā to von Mutius, 7 November 1904, Mushir-ud-Dowleh to the Persian community in Bahrain (tel.), translation, n.d., Trevor to Evelyn Grant-Duff, H.M. Chargé d'Affaires, Tehran, 23 November 1904 (tel.), and Grant-Duff to Trevor, 24 November 1904 (tel.), L/P & S/10/81.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 December 1904, No. 420, L/P & S/10/81.

Shaikh ^cIsā was obliged to comply. The compensation of Rs. 1,000 was paid to the Agency. The ringleaders were identified and flogged by a British seaman in the public street outside the Agency. Shaikh ^cIsā also offered to display a public notice prohibiting the application of sukhra to coolies employed by Europeans.

On 5 December 1905 Cox took up the second case, that of the molested Persians. Once again he was determined to take a strong line. The position of the "infinitesimal"¹ Persian community of Bahrain, he believed, was similar to that of the British Indian traders. If it were not for the existence of the Pax Britannica, such minorities "could hardly trade or reside in complete security in such surroundings even at ordinary times".² Moreover, if justice in this case was done to the aggrieved Persians, this fact would greatly strengthen the hands of the British Legation in Tehran in their dealings with the Persian Government.³

On the afternoon of 4 December, the day when Cox was preparing to take the Persian case in hand, however, Shaikh ^cIsā handed him an 'Istishhād (testimony) executed by his chief Sunni qādī. This document claimed that it was the Arab subjects who had been beaten and not vice versa. Cox refused to acknowledge the validity of an 'Istishhad which, he asserted, could not be accepted by any British Court or official. He avowed his intention to cross-examine all

1 Cox does not seem to have been aware that the Persian community of Bahrain was as large as it in fact was (see above, p. 238).

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 December 1904, No. 421, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Ibid.

persons concerned in the case. Shaikh ^CIsā realised the dangers of putting his Arab subjects in a British court of law faced with Shiite witnesses. However, he made a show of agreeing to Cox's demands, without having any intention of conforming to them because of the danger that such a procedure would establish a precedent.

On 5 December Cox interviewed the Persian witnesses and came to the conclusion that their injuries supported their claim that they were the ones attacked.¹ The next day Cox visited Shaikh ^CIsā with the object of securing his consent to the examination of the Arab witnesses. The Shaikh explained to Cox how damaging to ^CIsā's position in Bahrain Cox's proceedings were sure to be. Cox, whilst declaring his appreciation of Shaikh ^CIsā's difficulties, also stressed how important it was that justice should be seen to be done. A compromise was reached when Shaikh ^CIsā agreed to produce some of his subjects, at the same time making it clear that they would not be those actually involved in the incident.

On 7 December, at a court conducted by himself at the Agency, Cox interviewed the Arab witnesses. Shaikh Hamad was present. It was the claim of the Arab witnesses that the Persians had attacked first. Cox, after hearing the evidence, had to admit that he was unable to determine who had struck the first blow. However, he noted that two perfectly harmless Persians, one "a decrepit octogenarian", were both nearly killed and seven more severely injured in the course of the incident.² Cox demanded the punishment of the Arabs concerned

1 Ibid., and statements of Persian witnesses accompanying it.

2 Ibid., and the accompanying statements of the Arab witnesses.

and also insisted on the deportation of Shaikh Ali. ^CIsā was not to be allowed to refer to the case in his Shari^Ca court. Cox reasoned that "an exceedingly small community of Persians" would never dare to mount an attack "upon Arabs in an Arab town of some thousands of inhabitants". The Arabs were therefore the attackers and had committed a serious offence. He called upon Shaikh ^CIsā "as a ruler, to set aside his religious prejudices and have adequate justice meted out".¹

However, Shaikh ^CIsā was now fighting for something other than religious or national prejudices. His own rights of jurisdiction as ruler of Bahrain seemed to be threatened. He retorted that he had "one answer to give, namely that I will do nothing in this case except after trial by my own Shariat or Urf Court".² Even so, Cox was not going to be defied. He argued that this was a case for British justice and not for a Shari^Ca court, especially one which would be constituted by the two Sunni mullahs who were already involved in the affray. He pointed out that neither the Persian nor the British Governments would concede justice to have been done by a reference to the local mullahs. In addition, Cox claimed, no Muslims could be compelled to go to a Shari^Ca court, and the Persians had already refused to go. As for an Urf court, Cox bluntly told ^CIsā that he did not think that there were in Bahrain any "suitable persons ...upon whose integrity and intention to do justice any confidence could be placed". Cox went on to make the rather odd claim that trial by a British court did

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid. An Urf court is a civil court.

not mean "taking the Persians out of [Shaikh ^CIsā's] jurisdiction altogether". Finally, the Resident called on Shaikh ^CIsā to come to a compromise rather than to force the British Government to interpret his stand as an act of insubordination.¹

^CIsā, however, obstinately rejected Cox's threat. He still maintained that the only acceptable compromise could come after the case had been referred to his Shari^Ca court. Fully aware of the legal limitations on British power in Bahrain laid down by past treaties, he informed Cox that "If Government wish to seize Bahrain ... their arm is long and they can do it; but I will under no circumstances consent to the trial of these Persians by any tribunal but my own Courts".² For the first time since 1869 a British Resident had reached an impasse with Shaikh ^CIsā.

Cox did not believe that the question of the jurisdiction of Shaikh ^CIsā was a real obstacle to a settlement. He therefore suspected that the influence of anti-British advisers, such as Shaikh Ali, the Sunni mullahs and the Ottoman subject Muhammad b. ^CAbdul Wahāb was behind Shaikh ^CIsā's obstinacy. Cox warned that Shaikh ^CIsā's rejection of his advice had a "sinister significance" and that his ten days "enforced sojourn" in Bahrain had brought him to the conclusion that the state of things was very unsatisfactory. The ruler was not only old and weak, he was also apparently ignorant of the fact that he owed his position entirely to British support. The British

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., See also Prideaux to Cox, 19 November 1904, No. 272, L/P & S/10/81.

Government had consented to the succession of Shaikh Hamad who was "an overbearingly ignorant young man" and gave no appearance of being a promising successor. Bahrain, under ^CIsā or Hamad, was hardly any credit to Britain as a principality over which the British Government had for long exercised a virtual protectorate.

Therefore, if the Government decided to use coercion, then Shaikh ^CIsā should be deposed, his son rejected and one of the sons of Muhammad b. Khalīfa (see genealogical table) installed as ruler. This course of action would be simple and the new ruler could be given a new binding treaty with the British Government. The first major show of resistance to British wishes by a ruler of Bahrain since 1869 had resulted in proposals for British action for the deposition of a Bahrain shaikh, action reminiscent of that of Colonel Pelly in 1869.

However, Cox presented alternative proposals. If India chose not to take such a course, then ^CIsā should be forced to accept the demands of the British Government. The British should also "include the Customs questions and have done with it, seeing it has been troubling us so long". Finally, Cox insisted that the means of coercion should be available before any demands were made on ^CIsā.¹

The Government of India cabled Cox on 6 January 1905. His analysis of the Bahrain crisis was accepted and his proposed settlement of the German case approved. In regard to the Persian case, India was prepared to agree to the punishments suggested by Cox. They informed

1 Ibid.

him that a naval force could be sent to Bahrain by 2 February. If, in face of such a show of force, Shaikh ^CIsā still declined to comply with British demands, the Government of India wished to know if Cox would advise a threat to seize the Customs House.¹

As far as the proposal to remove Shaikh ^CIsā was concerned, however, the Government of India was not convinced that it would be advisable. Such a move would entail the risk of the resumption of the old family feuds among the Āl Khalīfa. These could be most damaging to British trade in the area.

Cox quickly cabled his reply. A threat to seize the Customs would be insufficient. Instead, he recommended that a threat to bombard Muharraḡ, if Shaikh ^CIsā refused to comply with British demands, would be more effective. If Shaikh ^CIsā did comply, Cox claimed, the Government could still warn him that "any further rejection of their advice in important matters" would not be tolerated. Such a warning, Cox hoped, might be effective in bringing the Shaikh to accept the advice of the Assistant Political Agent regarding the Customs when pressure was next applied on this issue. Meanwhile, the Resident was anxious to know whether the Government had arrived at a decision regarding the general question of British jurisdiction over the Persians in Bahrain.²

1 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 6 January 1905, tel. No. 84-E.B., L/P & S/7/173, register No. 323.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 10 January 1905 (tel.), L/P & S/7/173. See also Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 15 January 1905 (tel.), L/P & S/7/174, register No. 545.

The Government of India was prepared to adopt the recommendations of the Resident. Indeed, as far as Curzon was concerned, the coercion of Shaikh ^CIsā would be "a petty incident" of a kind which had "happened over and over again before, and would in former times have been carried out by the Government of India without any reference to the authorities at home".¹ Even so, Curzon was well aware that changing circumstances, in the form of increasing pressure by great European powers on Britain's predominance in the Gulf, had made Viceregal action there now subject to the close and critical scrutiny of the Home Government.

The Viceroy telegraphed London endorsing Cox's proposals. Curzon noted that the appeals for British protection made by the German and Persian subjects would "make the present opportunity specially favourable for asserting our protectorate" and would also minimize objections "of an international character".²

Curzon's proposals were considered by the Council of India which the Viceroy was later to accuse of wishing "to thwart and hamper" his work.³ The Council, whilst totally rejecting the seizure of the Customs House or administration, endorsed most of the measures proposed by the Government of India. Regarding the seizure of the Customs, Sir Denis Fitzpatrick warned Secretary of State Brodrick about the dangers of taking such a course. It would be asked what connection

1 Curzon to Brodrick (private), 16 February 1905, No. 19, Curzon Papers, F.111/164.

2 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 21 January 1905, tel. No. P. 306-E.B., L/P & S/7/174, register No. 545.

3 Ronaldshay, op. cit., II, 237.

there was between the riots in Bahrain and the Customs. It would also be assumed that the riots were merely a pretext for British intervention, the real object of which was the acquisition of the Customs administration "after which we have been hankering for some time past". Therefore, Fitzpatrick suggested to the Secretary of State, he should not agree to a course of action (the seizure of the Customs) which would bring discredit on the British Government. If the action was permitted, other native rulers would tend to regard British friendship and protection "as anything but an unmixed blessing".¹

The rest of the members of the Council of India endorsed these recommendations of Fitzpatrick. The proposal for flogging the ringleaders should be dropped as there were "obvious objections". Expulsion or imprisonment would be more suitable punishment for these offenders. However, the constitution of the court was to be left to the discretion of the Government of India. As far as the question of the occupation of the Customs House was concerned, the connection between Shaikh Ali's lawlessness, his uncle's incompetence and the Customs difficulties was so remote that the Home Government considered the proposal for the seizure "inexpedient". The Government of India was further cautioned that adequate force should be employed for any necessary coercion.²

, Cox returned to Bahrain on 23 February 1905 aboard HMS Redbreast.

1 Commentary by Fitzpatrick, 25 January 1905, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 15 February 1905 (tel.), Curzon Papers, F.111/175.

HMS Sphinx and HMS Fox, under the command of Captain J.B. Eustace, were already there. Not until the morning of 25 February was Shaikh ^CIsā summoned to attend the British Agency to receive an important message from the Government of India.¹ Captain Eustace needed time to deploy his ships in a way which frustrated any possible retaliation by Shaikh ^CIsā. Cox wanted time for the power of the assembled British force to impress itself on Shaikh ^CIsā and so weaken any spirit of resistance. A further reason for the delay was the need to make provision for the safety of the small European community as well as of the Persians and British Indians resident in Manāma. For the safety of these foreign residents, Captain Eustace ordered all marines from HMS Sphinx to co-operate with the Resident's guard in order to give the necessary protection.²

Under Shaikh ^CIsā's command on Muharraḡ island were 540 men armed with Martini rifles. The joint forces of Shaikh Ali and his uncle Khalīd, the Governor of Rifa^C, amounted to about 500 riflemen. In addition a large number of Arabs armed with native weapons were ready to aid both forces.³ Even so, Shaikh ^CIsā had no intention of taking the suicidal course of opposing British power. On the other hand, he was certainly prepared to use the presence of the British naval force to weaken the influence of Shaikh Ali and his followers in Bahrain while himself avoiding open hostility towards Ali. On 24 February, whilst Shaikh ^CIsā was paying his respects to Cox at the

1 Cox to Officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 March 1905, No. 119, L/P & S/7/176, register No. 770; Eustace to Atkinson-Willes, 2 March 1905, L/P & S/3/227, register No. 2813.

2 Eustace to Atkinson-Willes, 10 March 1905, L/P & S/3/227.

3 Ibid.

Agency, the latter had warned him that Shaikh Ali had better prepare for an early departure since that was the decision of the Government.¹ The ruler of Bahrain in fact secretly encouraged his nephew to abscond, calculating that this would incriminate Shaikh Ali further in the eyes of Cox, whilst he, ^CIsā, retained his nephew's confidence. However, Shaikh ^CIsā's cunning was of no use to him when he was faced with the ultimatum of the British Government which Cox presented him with on the morning of the 25 February.

The Resident made the following demands:-

- 1 That all ringleaders involved in the two incidents of September-November 1904 should be expelled from Bahrain.
- 2 That the Persian victims of the second assault should be compensated with Rs. 2,000.
- 3 That a guard of Shaikh ^CIsā's trusted men should be established to maintain law and order in Manāma.
- 4 That Shaikh Ali should be deported from Bahrain for a period of five years.
- 5 That a notification prohibiting the application of sukhra to coolies employed by Europeans in Bahrain should be issued.
- 6 That Shaikh ^CIsā should understand that the Government would no longer tolerate any further rejection of its advice in important matters.

Shaikh ^CIsā realised that to be seen to bow in the face of such

1 Cox to Officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 March 1905, No. 119, L/P & S/7/176, register No. 770; Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, 24 December 1904, No. 427, L/P & S/10/81; Prideaux to Cox, 18 December 1904, No. 296, L/P & S/10/81.

an ultimatum would be a shattering blow to his prestige among his family and the people of Bahrain. He tried to persuade Cox that such a humiliation would be in the interests neither of himself nor of the British protecting power. Shaikh ^CIsā therefore asked for an extension of the deadline which had been given him for complying with the ultimatum. Cox, however, was now a firm believer in the bad faith of Shaikh ^CIsā and declined to have any part in the "polite fiction" proposed by the ruler of Bahrain.

Even in this difficult situation, Shaikh ^CIsā found room for manoeuvring. He sent his youngest son, ^CAbdallah, to inform Shaikh Ali that he would shortly be attempting to arrest him at his home. Shaikh ^CIsā also told ^CAbdallah that he was to see Prideaux and tell him that he had visited Shaikh Ali and that he feared that Ali was likely to abscond during the night.

Shaikh ^CIsā's manoeuvrings seem to have met with some success. The outcome of ^CAbdallah's hint to Prideaux was that Cox instructed ^CAbdallah "to warn his father at once to take immediate steps to ensure his nephew's presence the next morning as arranged". ^CIsā replied that he intended to arrest Shaikh Ali instantly, "but to this end he would be glad of the moral support of some representative of the British Agency or of a few sepoys from the Agency guard".¹ Cox was doubtful about the advisability of complying with this request. In the end, however, he decided that if he now refused to co-operate with Shaikh ^CIsā, then the ruler of Bahrain would have been given an excuse

1 Cox to Officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 March 1905, No. 119, L/P & S/10/81.

for not complying with the part of the British ultimatum relating to the expulsion of Shaikh Ali. Accordingly, Cox ordered Captain Prideaux, with a small party of sepoy's under a British lieutenant, to accompany Shaikh ^CIsā's men in the operation. The raid met with no success, however. Earlier that day, 25 February, Ali had absconded on receiving Shaikh ^CAbdallah's warning.

On the morning of 26 February, at the expiry of the deadline of the ultimatum, Shaikh ^CIsā arrived at the Agency. He paid the Rs. 2,000 compensation for the Persians, declared that the guard to patrol Manāma was ready for inspection and presented Cox with the public notification prohibiting sukhra for the employees of Europeans in Bahrain. However, concerning Shaikh Ali and the ringleaders, Shaikh ^CIsā disavowed any knowledge of their whereabouts. Cox was annoyed by the escape of Ali and clearly held Shaikh ^CIsā responsible. Under the influence of Eustace's views on the subject and after consulting with Prideaux, Cox decided to take stern action against Shaikh ^CIsā. He demanded that Shaikh Ali's house, furniture, boats and animals should be confiscated. Shaikh Hamad, the successor-designate to the Shaikhdом, must be surrendered to him as a hostage and as a sign of ^CIsā's good faith. Shaikh ^CIsā's residence must immediately be transferred from Muharraḡ to Manāma during the stay of the Resident in Bahrain.¹

It was only with reluctance that Shaikh ^CIsā agreed to the confiscation of Ali's property. ^CIsā had hoped to give Ali's house

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¹ Ibid.

to Shaikh Hamad as a means of curtailing his nephew's power and influence for the benefit of his own eldest son.¹ On the other two demands, Shaikh ^CIsā refused to comply. He argued that he still considered himself a loyal friend of the British Government and that he had complied with its demands to the best of his ability. However Cox insisted and threatened to open fire on the three forts of Bahrain within one hour unless Shaikh Hamad surrendered himself voluntarily.²

In the face of this threat, Shaikh Hamad surrendered at noon on 26 February and was despatched to HMS Sphinx. Cox then seized Ali's house and had it put under a sepoy guard from the Agency. Shaikh ^CIsā, overawed by the show of strength, merely reminded Cox that the house was not Shaikh Ali's absolute property, but rather that of the Al Khalīfa family and was known as the 'Government House' of Manāma.³

In his drive to put Bahraini affairs in order, Cox, in agreement with Prideaux, warned the two Sunni mullahs to "conduct themselves in future with more circumspection" and to refrain from meddling in non-religious matters.⁴ Cox also, finding that Shaikh ^CIsā's attitude had become "much more satisfactory and submissive", asked him to send both mullahs to the Agency to see him. Shaikh ^CIsā, eager to subdue the followers of Ali, readily passed on the message.

1 In fact, on Cox's suggestion, Ali's house was given to Hamad two years later. Resident to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 September 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/7/193, register No. 1736; Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 23 September 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/7/193.

2 Eustace to Atkinson-Willes, 2 March 1905, L/P & S/3/227, register No. 2813.

3 Cox to Officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 March 1905, No. 119, L/P & S/10/81.

4 Ibid.

The outcome was that mullah Ahmad fled and mullah Q̄asim had to give himself up as a hostage to Cox in order to save his brother's house and property from confiscation.

Cox was triumphant over the way in which mullah Q̄asim had been delivered into his hands. He felt that the detention of "so venerable a Minister and one who had hitherto considered himself too important a personage, even to call upon the British representative", would have the effect of impressing the extent of British power upon the native mind.¹ Shortly afterwards mullah Ahmad returned to Bahrain from Qatar, and mullah Q̄asim was released.

With the settlement of the case of the two mullahs on 2 March, Cox considered his mission completed and returned to Bushire. In his report to the Government of India, Cox had to confess that he had only been partially successful and that he had failed to effect the capture of Shaikh Ali. Even so, Cox argued that Ali's flight to the mainland was possibly a better outcome than one "which would have entailed our watching him and perhaps maintaining him for some years to come".² Concerning Shaikh ʿIsā, Cox claimed that the measures taken had brought him to heel without any loss of life or local upheaval.

Before leaving Bahrain, Cox released Shaikh Hamad. The Resident considered that the detention of Hamad and the seriousness with which British concern for Bahrain had been demonstrated, would have

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

"imbued him with some sense of his own impotence". It would also have been brought home to him the "futility of imagining that he and his father could continue with impunity to flout the wishes of the British Government to whom indeed they owed everything".¹

In fact, before Cox left Bahrain, Shaikh ^CIsā, hoping to demonstrate his loyalty to the British Government, had presented the Resident with the title-deed of a plot of land, adjacent to the Agency, on which Cox wished to build quarters for the infantry guard. Further, ^CIsā had attempted to reassure Cox that he was entirely submissive to the Government and had no-one else to look to in times of difficulty. Cox had replied that he hoped ^CIsā would "give proof of his assurance in future and would look upon his political Agent as his best friend and adviser".²

The Government of India approved of Cox's efforts as being "satisfactory on the whole".³ In fact, Curzon was in reality well pleased with the results of the coercion of Shaikh ^CIsā. On 16 March he had claimed, in a private letter to Sir Arthur Godley, that Cox's action had "effected in six hours what he had not been able to secure in six months".⁴

The main outstanding problem was that of Shaikh Ali. However,

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 21 March 1905, tel. No. P. 1192-E.B., L/P & S/10/81, register No. 770. See also Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 21 March 1905 (tel.), L/P & S/7/175, register No. 591.

4 Curzon to Godley (private), 16 March 1905, No. 26, Curzon Papers, F.111/164.

only three weeks after his flight to Qatar, Ali wrote to Prideaux. He told the Assistant Political Agent that when Shaikh ^cAbdallah had warned him of the Government's intention to arrest and deport him, he had panicked. Now, having learnt that his house had been confiscated and his property burned, he was anxious that the Government should see justice done to him.¹ Ali claimed, in a petition to Shaikh ^cIsā of 24 March 1905, that he had been unjustly dealt with. He said he had fulfilled the agreement of 6 December 1904 by leaving Bahrain for three weeks.²

Prideaux wanted to have Shaikh Ali's surrender effected by his uncle. With the approval of Cox for his line of action, he told Shaikh ^cIsā that, until Shaikh Ali was brought in, his "reputation for good faith" would always be "under a cloud".³ However, Shaikh ^cIsā, pleading that Ali would, in the light of past circumstances, be unlikely to obey any orders he gave, asked Prideaux to write personally to his nephew.⁴ The Political Agent agreed. He informed Ali that, as the Government could not reduce his sentence, it would be well to "submit to the inevitable".⁵ Shaikh Ali finally surrendered to his uncle in Bahrain on 18 July.⁶ In September 1905 he was taken into

1 Petition of Ali b. Ahmad to Prideaux (translation), 24 March 1905, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Ibid.

3 Prideaux to Shaikh ^cIsā, 11 April 1905, No. 120, L/P & S/10/81.

4 Prideaux to Cox, 15 July 1905, No. 237, L/P & S/10/81.

5 Prideaux to Ali b. Ahmad, 7 July 1905, No. 224, L/P & S/10/81.

6 Ali b. Ahmad to Prideaux, 12 July 1905 and Prideaux to Cox, 22 July 1905, No. 241, L/P & S/10/81.

exile from Bushire to Bombay.¹

The disturbances of 1904 in Bahrain occurred because the Shaikhdom was still, in that year, an unreformed oriental principality. Among the ruling family, the Āl Khalīfa, power was still exercised in a personal and arbitrary way. Even a decade before this would not have mattered very much to Britain, the protecting power. However, from the mid-1890s, Britain's commercial and political supremacy in the Gulf had been threatened by other Powers. Moreover, the increasing importance and value of the trade conducted at Manāma and other Bahraini ports had made urgent the question of reforming the way in which the internal affairs of the Shaikhdom were conducted. Increasing commercial activity had also brought more foreign traders to the islands. These commercial interests found that the Āl Khalīfa's conduct of the internal administration was an obstacle to trade. It was certain that, sooner or later, a crisis would occur in the relations between the Āl Khalīfa and the foreign traders. It seems no coincidence that, when the crisis did occur, it first involved traders of a nationality (the Germans) which was least likely to tolerate oriental arbitrariness. However, it was not over the Bahnson incident that Shaikh ^CIsā proved to be the most obstinate. Some compromise in the traditions of the Āl Khalīfa could easily be permitted in the case

1 Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept. to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 September 1905, tel. No. 176P, L/P & S/10/81. Ali's period of exile lasted nearly three years, see A.P. Trevor, First Asst. to the Resident to Sec. to Govt. of India, 2 September 1908, L/P & S/7/222, register No. 1903.

of such powerful strangers as the Germans. It was rather different in the case of the Shiite Persian minority. The Āl Khalīfa had for long been accustomed to lord it over the conquered native Bahraini population who were Shiite.¹ Shaikh ^ḤIsā therefore would have found it hard to accept British demands that Persian Shiites should not go before the Shari^Ḥa court. It was the ruler's refusal to give way on what he considered to be a traditional right of his family which brought the crushing British intervention of February 1905. This intervention had the effect of demonstrating to the Shaikh how limited his powers were if the British chose to exert their own power.

The victory of the British Government after the surrender of Shaikh Ali seemed to be complete. However, although the British felt they had demonstrated to the world that, basically, they were the masters in Bahrain and were capable of redressing the grievances of foreign nationals in the Shaikhdom, all this was achieved only at a certain cost. Shaikh ^ḤIsā had come to heel in the face of an overwhelming show of strength, but he had also had his suspicions of British intentions strengthened. This was not likely to make the achievement of Britain's long-term objective of reforming the internal affairs of Bahrain, and especially the Customs, an easy task. The way forward for the reform of Bahrain was still an open question.

1 Lorimer, IIA, 207-08.

CHAPTER 6

THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE STATUS OF BAHRAIN

Major Cox returned to Bushire in March 1905 by no means satisfied with the outcome of the confrontation with Shaikh ^ḤIsā. Cox was an imperialist of the same mould as Curzon. As Political Agent in Muscat a few years earlier, he had considerable success in inducing the Sultan to reform his affairs. Like the Shaikh of Bahrain, the ruler of Muscat had been in the habit of leasing the management of his Customs to a syndicate of Indian merchants. Cox had induced him to take over the management of the Customs himself.¹ Cox was less likely than another Resident to be satisfied with only partial victory in Bahrain.

Within days of arriving back in Bushire, Cox presented a series of new proposals for further action on Bahrain. The recent action over the ultimatum had certainly brought Shaikh ^ḤIsā to a better understanding of his obligations towards the Government of India. However, Cox did not feel that this was enough. The Bahrain crisis had raised the question of whether Shaikh ^ḤIsā was a fit person to have responsibility for the Government of a place of such growing importance. The increasing intrusion of rival European Powers in the Gulf area would be even more difficult to meet if Shaikh ^ḤIsā's regime in Bahrain was given a "new lease of life".² To meet this threat effectively the

1 'Administration Reports' for the years 1900-05. See also Busch, op. cit., p. 158, note 12. The Sultan's takeover of the Customs did not prevent British efforts to bring about further reforms in Customs management, see below, p. 282.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 11 March 1905, No. 123, L/P & S/10/81.

Shaikhdom might be made into a "convenient centre of British influence". Cox pointed out that a "suitable tract of territory" under "effective occupation" had been the vision of every British Resident in the Gulf since the time of Colonel Pelly in the 1860s, and Bahrain was strategically placed only a few miles from Qatar, Hasā and the Trucial Coast.¹

The Resident regretted that "the exigencies of imperial politics" did not admit the British making their "moral protectorate" over Bahrain into "an open and effective one", especially since the events of the past months had provided the British with "such manifest and cogent grounds" for taking such a step.²

Cox outlined a scheme for the legal transfer of local government in Bahrain into British hands. Shaikh ^CIsā should be told that recent events had proved his incompetence. Shaikh Ali b. Ahmad was still a fugitive in Qatar. Shaikh ^CIsā's own successor-designate, Shaikh Hamad, had also failed to show that he was aware of the "responsibilities" of his position. ^CIsā should be informed that, as the British Government held itself morally responsible for trade, security and the well-being of Europeans in the Shaikhdom, the Government of India could no longer allow him responsibility for the control of local government in Bahrain.³

Cox recommended that Shaikh ^CIsā should be demoted to the position

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

of a figurehead ruler of Muharraḡ island. Manāma should be governed by a wazīr selected by the Government of India and "under the immediate guidance" of the Assistant Political Agent. A suitable wazīr might be Sayyid Muhammad b. Sa^Cīd, the son of the late wazīr of the Sultan of Muscat. A police force of fifty men, either locally enlisted or brought in from outside, under a subordinate police officer of the Government of India, should be recruited to assist the Assistant Political Agent and the wazīr in governing the Shaikhdom. Shaikh Hamad should be warned that "ultimate acquiescence in his succession" would depend entirely on his future behaviour. The Assistant Political Agent should "prevail upon" Shaikh ^CĪsā to allow his grandson Khalīfa to go to India for "education and training" in case a new successor was needed.¹

The Government of India replied to Cox's proposals on 17 May 1905. They agreed with Cox about Shaikh ^CĪsā's lack of "vigour and natural qualifications". Shaikh ^CĪsā should certainly be required to reform his administration, and British control over the administration of Bahrain should be increased. It was also a good idea to exploit the favourable situation created by the overawing of Shaikh ^CĪsā in February 1905. However, the Government of India could not agree with Cox's idea of declaring an open protectorate. It was pointless to discuss, or even to contemplate, a matter "so distasteful to the views of his Majesty's Government, and so foreign to the policy which they are pursuing" in the Gulf.²

1 Ibid.

2 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 17 May 1905, No. 1873-E.B., L/P & S/10/81.

The Government of India, if left to themselves, might well have given support to a scheme something like that proposed by Cox. For London, however, it was important that shows of force should be kept to a minimum. India was prepared to sanction Cox's suggestion for cautioning Shaikh Hamad and for sending Shaikh Khalīfa to India for education. However, the removal of Shaikh ʿĪsā from power in Manāma could not be contemplated for the time being. The appointment of a wazīr "would doubtless have the most far-reaching results on the Government of Bahrein". However, such a step, and the introduction of an efficient policing system, would entail "additional expense and must render fiscal reform the more pressing". It would, of course, be incumbent on such a new wazīr to introduce the changes in the Customs administration of Bahrain for which the British had long been pressing. However, Shaikh ʿĪsā was hardly likely to accept a British nominee to superintend his entire administration when he was so adamant in opposing a British candidate to supervise a single department (the Customs).¹

Reform, the Government of India still insisted, should begin with the Customs. In April 1904 they had indicated to the Home Government that Customs reform was the first priority to which the newly appointed Political Agent, Prideaux (see Chapter 5), should address himself. However, Prideaux had not yet had either the time or the opportunity to establish the necessary "moral influence" over the Shaikh. Once this was established, the combined influence of Prideaux and Cox "ought to suffice ... unaided ... without the necessity for tendering advice in the formal manner". New proposals for reform should, when the time was ripe, be "so framed and so presented to the Chief as to

1 Ibid.

obviate the necessity for another intervention and further threatened bombardment".¹

Cox was therefore asked to submit new proposals for reforming the Bahrain Customs. The Resident should explain the relation of the Customs question to the appointment of a wazīr, the probable reaction of Shaikh ^cĪsā to proposals for reform, how far he was likely to prove amenable to advice, and in what manner Cox would propose to apply pressure on ^cĪsā should it be required.²

In his reply of 4 June 1905³, Cox apologised for failing to appreciate adequately "the width of the gulf which diplomacy places between the interpretation of the expression 'under the protection of' and 'under the protectorate of'". Cox had not raised the Customs issue simply because, after London's rejection of his suggestion that the Customs should be taken over at the time of the February ultimatum, he had assumed that the fixed policy in respect of the Customs administration was not to try to influence ^cĪsā by means of pressure from Prideaux.

The Resident also pointed out that, regarding the appointment of a wazīr, he had been influenced by certain administrative considerations in addition to the political ones he had communicated to the Government of India. He felt that Captain Prideaux had lacked the necessary

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, 4 June 1905, No. 244, L/P & S/10/81.

"colloquial proficiency in Arabic" to handle the demanding duties of his position.¹ The old munshi of the Agency, apart from being a Shiite, was persona non grata with Shaikh ^CIsā; the newly appointed young munshi, needed more time to become thoroughly versed in his work. Further, the fact that the Political Agent had once already, in 1899, been deputed to Bahrain to put pressure on Shaikh ^CIsā regarding certain issues, seemed to Cox to be "hardly the best recommendation" for Prideaux now to gain the confidence of the ruler of Bahrain.

Finally, Cox agreed that Shaikh ^CIsā would not welcome the idea of a wazīr. However, he affirmed that the proposal had been tendered "on the supposition that Sheikh Esa would be compelled to accept him, and his appointment was not associated in any way with the question of Customs control". In fact, this was not really true. Cox went on to say that he had proposed the idea of a wazīr because this recommendation was not open to the objection London had raised to seizing the Customs in February - i.e. that it had little connection with Shaikh Ali's lawlessness and ^CIsā's inability to control him. In other words, forcing ^CIsā to accept a wazīr would not arouse the doubts about British disinterestedness that the seizure of the Customs would. However, if a wazīr was once appointed and ^CIsā made a figure-head, it is obvious that the reform of the Customs would have been a simple matter. The appointment of a wazīr certainly was connected with the Customs issue. It is fair to assume that one reason why Cox

1 Knowledge of colloquial Arabic was a prerequisite for the job and Prideaux's lack of proficiency in this respect had made him the second choice. Captain Vere de Vere Hunt was preferred by the Government of India but declined the offer for personal reasons. See Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 31 August 1904 (tel.), L/P & S/7/168, register No. 1506.

was making his proposal for a wazīr was because it was a means of settling the Customs issue once and for all. Cox ended his report by saying that he would not make any further proposals before he visited Bahrain once more.

At this point, an examination of the views of the Assistant Political Agent on the question of reform in Bahrain may be in place. Nine month's service had developed Captain Prideaux's understanding of the intricate affairs of the Shaikhdom. When the decisive reform of Bahrain's affairs later occurred, in the form of the Order in Council for the Shaikhdom, it was based on proposals put forward by Prideaux. Prideaux's views were outlined in a letter of 24 June 1905 to the Resident at Bushire.¹ Prideaux felt that ending the local tyranny practised in Bahrain was the direction immediate reform should take, rather than taking possession of the Customs. Shaikh ^CIsā was determined to resist the reform of the Customs "to the utmost of his capability". Many influential people in Bahrain, including the Shaikh's "advisers and associates", profited considerably from the existing system of farming the Customs. The "special concessions" these influential persons extorted from the farmers of the Customs would be inconceivable under a "state-managed Department". Vehement opposition would therefore always exist to the system of Customs administration the British were pressing for.²

Prideaux favoured an alternative approach of making Shaikh ^CIsā's financial position weaker. If the Government succeeded in placing

1 Prideaux to Cox, 24 June 1905, No. 204, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Ibid.

a British officer in charge of the Customs, Shaikh ^ḥIsā's income would increase annually by Rs. 150,000 without any conditions being placed on the disbursement of the increased income, which would simply increase oppression and corruption. The Political Agent calculated that, at the termination of the farming contract in 1908, Shaikh ^ḥIsā would become heavily in debt and would find himself "compelled to turn to Government for pecuniary assistance". The Government could then dictate terms for whatever reform of affairs in Bahrain they considered necessary.¹

The Customs issue, Prideaux argued, should be allowed to "subside into the background". Two other issues of "immeasurably greater importance" should be given priority. These were, firstly, the "cruelties" inflicted upon the ruler's subjects by members of the Āl Khalīfa: the practice of sukhra which still operated despite its official banning by the Shaikh, the corruption of the Judicial and Land Revenue officials, and the corruption of the qādis in succession cases. Secondly, the Shaikh's practice of welcoming to the island every summer groups of bedouins from the mainland should be stopped. This practice was a great drain on Bahrain's resources as well as a menace to law and order, since the bedouin 'guests' committed a variety of crimes and harassed the townspeople of Manāma without any check.²

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid. Prideaux had also recently recommended measures to stop the import of new slaves into Bahrain, which continued in complete disregard of long-standing agreements with the British: Prideaux to Cox, 26 May 1905, No. 173, L/P & S/7/180, register No. 1490.

To combat these abuses Prideaux asked for powers similar to those of Political Agents in the Native States of India. In these States all persons had the privilege of appealing to the local Political Officer against acts of oppression. Cases of injustice were constantly being brought to his door, Prideaux claimed. However, since, as things stood, he was "more on the pattern of a consular officer in Persia than of an Indian Political Officer", he could take no action to dispense justice to the complainants.¹

The practical measures Prideaux advocated to achieve this increase in his powers of jurisdiction were cautious. Confident that ultimately he would gain Shaikh ^CIsā's trust, Prideaux suggested that, for the moment, the Government should "leave undiminished the internal sovereign rights of the Chief where they do not involve the Government of India in dishonour". However, Shaikh ^CIsā should be informed that the Political Agent had been instructed to take notice of all cases of injustice committed in Bahrain and to press for the punishment of the offender. This policy, Prideaux assured the Government, was the only remaining way of regaining ^CIsā's faith in British bona fides. Any more pressure on other aspects of reform which the British could not claim to be entitled to "on explicit (i.e. treaty) grounds" would make the Political Agent's task more difficult.²

Cox, whilst agreeing with Prideaux as far as a number of his reforming objectives were concerned, was clearly far more appreciative than his subordinate what the Government of India would or would not

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

allow in the way of methods. This was apparent from Cox's comments on Prideaux's letter of 24 June 1905. The Resident declined to approve Prideaux's priorities of reform before the Government of India had clearly defined the status of Bahrain. He agreed with Prideaux that it was necessary for him to acquire more influence over the Shaikh before any attempt was made to apply pressure on him on such proposals as the appointment of a wazīr and a police force. However, Cox would not sanction Prideaux's request to take cases of injustice submitted by the Shaikh's subjects into his own hands. Cox believed that Shaikh ^CIsā would oppose such a measure as much as he opposed the Customs reform plan. The Resident stated his opinion that Prideaux's "zeal for reform" had a tendency to carry him "too fast and too far". Even so, the Political Agent's proposals were of a kind which was only compatible with "a declared and effective British Protectorate". The Government did not, Cox believed, have any middle course open to it. It either had to treat Bahrain as a protectorate, or leave it as an independent principality. Cox remained in favour of a British protectorate with the control of the Customs as his most urgent priority.¹

Cox insisted that British commercial and political interests required the establishment of a reasonably efficient fiscal administration through which the Government would be able to exercise some control over the Shaikh's finances. As far as the bedouin scourge was concerned, Cox argued that it would not be got rid of overnight no matter how strong the rule of law became in Bahrain. The British would be

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 16 July 1905, No. 331, L/P & S/10/81 and Cox's memorandum on details of Political Agent's letter No. 204, 24 June 1905, enclosure in Cox's letter of 16 July 1905.

challenging an ingrained custom. Finally, Cox reiterated his loss of confidence in Shaikh ^ḤIsā and declared that he still hoped the Government of India had not completely ruled out further coercive measures against the Shaikh.¹

In a draft reply to Cox, which they sent to London for comments, the Government of India rejected his suggestion that there was no middle course between treating Bahrain as a full British protectorate and as an independent principality.² Moreover, even if Bahrain were to be formally declared a British protectorate, there was no authority for supposing that Britain would necessarily possess the right to intervene in the island's internal affairs, especially to the extent contemplated by Prideaux. This misconception was due to the assumption which had been made that the alternative to regarding Shaikh ^ḤIsā as an independent sovereign was to treat him "like a petty Indian Raja". The British in India were "sovereign", whereas in Bahrain they were merely the "protecting power". The reciprocal rights and obligations which had emerged between the Government and the Indian Native States had "as yet ... not exact counterpart in the relations of Great Britain to Bahrein".³

What powers Britain possessed to influence the internal affairs of Bahrain rested on the following principles. Since the British Government was given the authority by treaty to control the foreign

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 16 July 1905, No. 331, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Draft of a proposed letter from Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, Appendix A, attached to No. 178, from Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 14 September 1905, Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon in the Foreign Department, Vol. IV, Persia and the Persian Gulf (Confidential), Curzon papers, F.111/531.

3 Ibid.

relations of Bahrain, it also undertook to protect foreigners resident in the Shaikhdom. Consequently, British influence and authority were, and must remain, paramount in Bahrain. This influence, being primarily political, both in character and origin, gave the British Government the right to insist that their advice in matters of importance be adopted. Acquiescence was demanded in return for the advantages which British protection conferred on Bahrain. These points had been explicitly stated in the ultimatum presented to Shaikh ^cIsā on 25 February 1905. Action in contravention of such advice would not be tolerated and the Protecting Power would be the judge of the penalty for such a violation.

Moreover, Britain's special political position in Bahrain gave her not merely an interest but a recognised right of interference in the question of succession to the Shaikhship. The Government had recognised Shaikh Hamad as heir-apparent in compliance with the ruler's wishes. They therefore retained their right to withdraw their recognition, should the need arise, and to nominate another successor. The exercise of such a right was undoubtedly inconsistent with independent sovereignty and involved direct interference in the internal affairs of the Shaikhdom. The admission of such a right by Shaikh ^cIsā was the most explicit evidence yet supplied of the dimensions which the protectorate, which Britain in fact exercised over Bahrain, had already assumed.¹

Finally, the Government of India proposed to ask Cox to advise it as to the manner in which, and the moment when, Shaikh ^cIsā could

1 Ibid.

be informed that his dependence on the British Government was inconsistent with his complete neglect of their repeated advice in the matter of the control of the Customs, a subject which certainly could not be shelved. Prideaux was to be told to limit himself to the business of gaining the confidence of the ruler rather than applying pressure to force him to adopt premature reforms. The Political Agent's task should be eventually to build up a position which would enable him to tender advice for the gradual amelioration of the internal administration of the islands.¹

The Political Committee at the India Office approached the problems of the Shaikhdom more cautiously than did India. The Committee strongly suspected that the Government of India was trying to force the Home Government into taking more responsibility for the Shaikhdom, as they had successfully done in 1899 over Kuwait.² Moreover, any forcible takeover of the Customs would revive the controversy concerning sovereignty over Bahrain, which was still claimed by Turkey and Persia. This was undesirable as far as the Political Committee was concerned, especially at a time when the British Government was experiencing difficulty in establishing its right to protect Bahraini subjects in Turkish and Persian territory. Finally, the Committee queried whether or not Shaikh ^CIsā's continued allegiance could be relied on were he to be forced to hand over the Customs administration to a British-appointed officer.³

1 Ibid.

2 Busch, op. cit., pp. 94-113; Ravinder Kumar, India and the Persian Gulf Region, 1858-1907, p. 138; J.B. Kelly, 'Salisbury, Curzon and the Kuwait Agreement of 1899', Studies in International History (London, 1967), pp. 249-89.

3 William Lee-Warner, commentary of 10 October 1905, on India's draft letter to Cox, L/P & S/10/81.

On 10 November 1905, the Home Government declared that the time had not yet come to define "in strict terms" the position of the Shaikh of Bahrain towards the protecting British power. Moreover, the Government of India's account of the "attributes of sovereignty" of Indian Native States and the Shaikhdom of Bahrain could not unreservedly be accepted as correct. It would, therefore, suffice if the British authorities in the Gulf acted "steadily and, as far as possible unobtrusively" to increase their influence and the confidence of the Shaikh in their advice. The Customs issue would receive the Government's full consideration on receipt of any specific recommendations.¹

Whilst these consultations about the future of Bahrain were being conducted between the various British authorities responsible for the formation of policy, Shaikh ^CIsā himself was reacting to the events of February 1905. Ever since 1899 he had suspected the British of wanting to take control of Bahrain's internal affairs. However, the demonstration of naval force in February 1905 represented a drastic change in Anglo-Bahraini relations which could not be justified by reference to any treaty made with the British Government. The result of the British action of February 1905 seems to have been to prompt Shaikh ^CIsā to take measures to try to prevent any further erosion of his authority, especially over the Customs. The fact that Shaikh Mubārak of Kuwait and Shaikh Khaz^Cal of Muḥammara had both refused to hand over their Customs to a British-appointed officer encouraged Shaikh ^CIsā.² The ruler of Bahrain must also have been encouraged by the fact that Cox, in February 1905, had failed to occupy his Customs House.

1 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 10 November 1905, Secret No. 34, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Busch, op. cit., p. 242.

During May 1905 Prideaux came to suspect that Shaikh ^cIsā was negotiating with foreign agents with a view to exchanging British protection for that of another Power.¹ It was suspected that a journey to Baghdad which Shaikh Ali b. Muhammad, a cousin of Shaikh ^cIsā, had undertaken, had had such a purpose. In addition, two characters in Bahrain were viewed with suspicion by Prideaux. One was a Frenchman called Gaston Peronne who posed as a pearl merchant, and who had been closely watched by the British authorities since his arrival in the Gulf.² A rumour (which Prideaux was unable to credit) was circulating in Bahrain that Peronne had been invited by Shaikh ^cIsā "to fly the French flag" there. The other suspect was Muhammad b. ^cAbdul Wahāb, considered by Prideaux to be the "unofficially recognised mouth-piece of the Turks" in Bahrain. Muhammad b. ^cAbdul Wahāb kept in close touch with all the foreign consuls in Bushire.³

British suspicions were also developing about the character of Shaikh Hamad. Prideaux, whilst doubting whether Shaikh ^cIsā would be foolish enough to try to break the ties binding him to the British Government, was convinced that Shaikh Hamad would use all his power and influence to bring about such an end.⁴

The extent to which Shaikh ^cIsā had become estranged from his

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- 1 Prideaux to Resident, 19 May 1905, No. 162, enclosure in A.P. Trevor, First Asst. Resident to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 27 May 1905, No. 236, L/P & S/10/81.
 - 2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 10 June 1905, No. 254, L/P & S/10/81.
 - 3 Prideaux to Cox, 27 May 1905, No. 175, L/P & S/10/81.
 - 4 Prideaux to Resident, Bushire, 19 May 1905, No. 162, L/P & S/10/81.

British protectors was shown in a letter he sent to Prideaux on 30 May 1905. Shaikh ^CIsā warned Prideaux that, according to the treaties he had signed with the British, he was an independent Arab ruler. He hoped the Government would appreciate this fact and remedy the lowering of his prestige which had been caused by the recent naval demonstration. Shaikh ^CIsā claimed he had always accepted the advice of the Government except in cases he thought would be injurious to his interests, such as the Customs administration. He would no longer tolerate any interference in Bahrain's internal affairs. Shaikh ^CIsā also said that he would not feel at rest until he had got the administration of the Customs into his own hands. He proposed that the Government should help pay off the banians so that the periodic farming-out of the Customs could be ended.¹ Finally he warned Prideaux that if he did not shortly receive a reply, he would feel obliged to communicate directly with the Government of India.²

On receiving notification of the Shaikh's letter, Cox decided that ^CIsā would never have dared to write in such a manner without an "astute prompter at his elbow". He proposed that an informal memorandum should be communicated to the Shaikh by Prideaux, refuting ^CIsā's claims and reminding him of his treaty obligations.³ The Government of India was prepared to approve this course of action since, although evidence of Shaikh ^CIsā's intrigues with foreign powers was not strong enough to justify a remonstrance, it was necessary to

1 The British did not consider that Shaikh ^CIsā could really have meant to be taken seriously on this proposal. Cox pointed out that it really amounted to asking that the Government of India should pay off Shaikh ^CIsā's debts without any compensating advantage. Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, No. 73, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Shaikh ^CIsā to Prideaux, 30 May 1905, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 11 June 1905, No. 259, L/P & S/10/81.

let him know unofficially that his proceedings were being watched.¹

In the memorandum, Shaikh ^ḤIsā was told that it was in his best interests that he should adopt the Government's advice and not listen to the words of "evil wishers". Regarding the cancellation of the banians' contract to farm the Customs, if the Government were to lend ^ḤIsā the money necessary to pay off the banians, adequate safeguards and assurances would be needed for the proper management of the Customs. The only possible way would be for an Indian official to be appointed to control the Customs. Shaikh ^ḤIsā was reminded that the Sultan of Muscat had benefited from higher revenues after he had agreed to employ "trained men from India" to manage his Customs.²

The Shaikh was most annoyed that his complaints had been rejected. To add to Shaikh ^ḤIsā's dissatisfaction, Prideaux delivered to Shaikh Hamad the Government's warning that its ultimate acquiescence in his succession would depend on his future behaviour being satisfactory.³

Shaikh ^ḤIsā's response was to prepare a petition, which he sent to the Secretary of State for India through the agent of Kynoch Limited, an arms firm. The focus of the ruler's complaints was the appointment of Prideaux as Political Agent, an appointment which Shaikh ^ḤIsā shrewdly connected with the determination of India to take over his Customs.⁴

1 Asst. Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 12 July 1905, No. 2659 E.B., L/P & S/10/81.

2 Cox to Prideaux, containing the memorandum from Cox to Shaikh ^ḤIsā, 7 June 1905, No. 781, L/P & S/10/81.

3 Prideaux to Cox, 24 June 1905, No. 204, L/P & S/10/81.

4 See Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 December 1904, No. 421, L/P & S/10/81.

Anglo-Bahraini relations, Shaikh ^CIsā claimed, were no longer based on trust and mutual respect. Since 1899 the "perfect quietness" that he had previously enjoyed with the Native Agent had disappeared. The new Political Agent was an Englishman who was ignorant of the religious law and customs of Muslims. Moreover, this new Agent had immediately begun to interfere in local affairs. As a result he, the Shaikh, had been obliged to place an interdict on the arms traffic of Bahrain even though freedom of trade in this commodity prevailed all along the Arabian coast. His flagstaff, the sign of his rank, had been thrown down by the British representative. Finally, Shaikh ^CIsā complained, he had not yet received any satisfaction over his grievances and he hoped that the British Government would soon restore him to his "previous quietness and contentment".¹

The petition did in fact make some impact at the India Office. Frank Huxham, the Secretary and Manager of Kynoch's who was responsible for the delivery of the petition, stressed that the Shaikh was "a friend of the English and supports us in preference to foreign competitors" at a time when it was difficult to counteract the influence of foreign diplomacy in commercial matters.² Secretary of State Brodrick forwarded a copy of the petition to India and asked for any observations on the fact that Shaikh ^CIsā had employed the agent of a commercial firm for the purposes of a political communication. He further requested that he might be informed of any action that might be taken in the

1 Shaikh ^CIsā to Sec. of State for India, 2 October 1905, register No. 3591, L/P & S/10/81.

2 Huxham to India Office, 14 November 1905, L/P & S/10/81, Register No. 3591.

matter.¹

The Government of India, in turn, asked Cox to report on Shaikh ^cIsā's grievances. They were also anxious to discover the real author of the petition, because they could not believe that the Shaikh had personally taken such a step.²

Prideaux thought it reasonable to believe that Shaikh ^cIsā had carried out his threat simply because the Government had not sent a definite reply to his grievances. He also considered that Muhammad b. ^cAbdul Wahāb had been involved in the affair.³ Later, Cox discovered from the 'Return of Arms and Administrations' shipped by S.S. Baluchistan during January 1906 that Monsieur Goguyer was a client of Kynoch Limited. From this, and from other circumstantial evidence, Cox drew the conclusion that Goguyer had been largely responsible for the writing of the petition. He had also presumably been responsible for the method of communicating it to the India Office, since Shaikh ^cIsā himself had no direct dealings with Kynochs.⁴

On 14 February Major Cox went personally to Bahrain to interview

- 1 Sec. of State for India to Govt. of India, 24 November 1905, Secret No. 39, L/P & S/10/81.
- 2 Deputy Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 6 December 1905, No. 4472-E.B., register No. 1054, and Asst. Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 19 December 1905, L/P & S/10/81.
- 3 Prideaux to Cox, 13 January 1906, No. 24, L/P & S/10/81.
- 4 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 21 January 1906, No. 27; Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 February 1906, No. 46; Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 22 February 1906, No. 59, and Prideaux to Cox, 27 January 1906, No. 50, L/P & S/10/81.

Shaikh ^CIsā. The crux of the ensuing discussion concerned the Shaikh's authority over the internal affairs of the Shaikhdom. ^CIsā remained adamant regarding his independence, which he declared to mean the exclusion of any interference on the part of the British authorities in his internal affairs. He would be the judge of what Government advice he would accept, just as had been the case prior to 1899.

Shaikh ^CIsā also took the opportunity to raise a series of grievances which had built up over the past years. The ruler complained about the failure of the British to obtain reparation on his behalf for the murder of his kinsman Shaikh Salīmān b. Du^Caij in 1900 (see Chapter 4), or to stop piratical raids on Bahraini shipping of his cousin Ahmad b. Salīmān. ^CIsā had been complaining to the Government about these attacks since 1880 but had failed to get satisfaction. Cox could only say that the British would continue to do their utmost to resolve these problems.

As far as Shaikh ^CIsā's grievance over the flagstaff issue was concerned, Cox claimed that the post concerned had not been thrown down under the orders of Prideaux but had been simply blown down by the wind. Regarding Shaikh Ali's house, Cox denied any intention by the Government to confiscate it outright. He added that it had been decided to return the house when assurances were given that affairs in Manāma were in a more settled state. In fact it is clear that the house was being retained as a bargaining counter. Cox said he would ask the Government for permission for the house to be returned immediately provided Shaikh ^CIsā "showed himself amenable to advice in other ways". ^CIsā agreed to the proposal.

Cox then raised the question of the petition. The Shaikh emphasised that he had written it since he had failed to receive any favourable answer to his requests. He felt aggrieved about the prohibition of the arms traffic, partly because the agreement had been "taken from him arbitrarily", and also because prohibition had meant a great loss of Customs revenue for him. Apart from all this, the arms traffic was still going on in other places along the Arab coast such as Kuwait and Muscat.

Finally, Cox raised what was for the British the most vital issue in Anglo-Bahraini relations, that of the Customs administration. Cox was determined that the Government should take charge whatever objection Shaikh ^CIsā raised. But ^CIsā remained as obstinate as before. When Cox finally threatened Shaikh ^CIsā with another ultimatum, the ruler merely repeated the reply he had given over the question of the trial of Persians in his own Shari^Ca court: 'If Government wish to do so against my wishes it is of course within their power, but it will not be done with my consent'.¹

On 25 February 1906 Cox wrote to the Government of India about the outcome of his meeting with Shaikh ^CIsā. The ruler, he reported, was exaggerating his grievances in order to extract more freedom of action vis-a-vis the Government. Cox said he believed that the Shaikh was really expecting the Government to take control of the Customs, but in a way that would enable him to satisfy his "ignorant

¹ Cox's memorandum on his interview with Shaikh ^CIsā, enclosure in Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, No. 74, L/P & S/10/81.

entourage" that it was beyond his power to prevent it. Once the Government was in control of the Customs, ^CIsā would soon "settle down quietly to the inevitable" and, in fact, would in the end be thankful to Britain for having carried out the measure. Cox therefore suggested that the Government should take over the Customs as soon as it could conveniently be arranged. He admitted that any bold measure taken by the Government was bound to evoke hostile criticism in the Gulf. However, he warned, the longer action was delayed over such important issues, the more criticism the Government would eventually have to face. Moreover, the assumption of the Bahrain Customs would favourably affect the British position in Muscat where the Sultan was also under pressure to accept British control of his Customs arrangements. In addition, such a step would fall within the limits prescribed by the policy of the Home Government, a policy which demanded early steps to "publicly strengthen and affirm our authority over Bahrein". Early measures would not only frustrate the revival of the Persian claim to Bahrain¹, but also thwart the attempts of European merchants to claim extra-territoriality (being outside the jurisdiction of Bahrain) and Consular intervention in regard to their affairs.²

These recommendations of Cox were forwarded to London by the Government of India without any comments. Since India had expressed no opinion, the Political Committee at the India Office did not deem it

1 For details see L/P & S/10/83.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, No. 74, L/P & S/10/81.

necessary at that stage to take any further action.¹

The Government of India's answer to Shaikh ^CIsā's petition rejected his complaints over the arms traffic. It was not true that the prohibition on this trade was not being enforced in Muscat, Kuwait, and the Trucial Coast. Moreover, ^CIsā himself had acted more than once in the past to ban or control arms imports as a means of preventing arms falling into the hands of his enemies on the mainland.

Concerning ^CIsā's grievances about Prideaux, the Government refused to be moved. The appointment of an English representative after the death of the previous Muslim one was necessitated by the considerable change in "political and commercial conditions" in Bahrain whereby a more efficient representative was needed. The Government could not admit any grounds for grievance in the matter. The English representative was eminently suitable as Shaikh ^CIsā would now be able to rely on his advice with confidence. Whatever increase of trade had been enjoyed by the merchants of Bahrain in recent years was largely due to the presence of a British officer there.

On the case of Shaikh Ali, the Government of India refused to discuss the issue any further. He had been punished for rebelling against Shaikh ^CIsā's orders and for setting at nought the commands of the British Government. The Government did not believe that ^CIsā was "actuated by serious motives" when he complained about the fall

¹ Commentary regarding Shaikh ^CIsā's memorial, L/P & S/10/81, register No. 1054.

of his flagstaff. Finally, the Government of India pointed out to ^cIsā that he had no right to communicate with them through any other channel except that of the British officer in Bahrain.¹

✓ At this point Cox decided that a more conciliatory approach to Shaikh ^cIsā might prove to be more fruitful. Cox asked permission to approach the Shaikh informally with a proposition that he lease his Customs farm to the Indian Government for Rs. 350,000 annually with an advance of Rs. 150,000 to relieve him from his financial difficulties.² The Government of India saw no objection to the proposal, provided the Home Government approved the terms of the lease and on the understanding that they were prepared to lease the entire Customs but not a mere portion of it.³

However, Shaikh ^cIsā refused to entertain even this proposal.⁴ Thereupon the Government of India decided against further action in the matter for the time being. Nevertheless, Cox was asked to be vigilant. If trade became hampered by the Shaikh's management of the Customs, or if the farm were leased to "subjects of foreign powers", then such circumstances would afford a suitable

1 Asst. Sec. to Govt. of India to Cox, 22 May 1906, No. 2211-E.B., L/P & S/10/81, register No. 1054.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 July 1906, L/P & S/10/81, register No. 1775.

3 Sec. to Govt. of India to Cox, 14 August 1906, No. 3363-E.B., L/P & S/10/81, register No. 1775.

4 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 1 September 1906; Cox to Shaikh ^cIsā, 14 August 1906; Shaikh ^cIsā to Cox, 23 August 1906, and Prideaux to Cox, 24 August 1906, L/P & S/10/81.

opportunity for interfering effectively in the Customs administration.¹

At about this time Cox received information on gun-running in the Gulf from the Belgian Director-General of Customs at Bushire, M. Heynssens, which threw much light on the reasons for Shaikh ^cIsā's stubborn refusal to accept British control of his Customs arrangements.² It was clear, Cox told the Government of India in December 1906, that Shaikh ^cIsā, in spite of all his complaints about having had to ban the arms trade at Bahrain, had allowed Manāma to become "an organised base for the contraband distribution of arms and ammunition". This, indeed, suggested "a cogent reason, though doubtless not the only one, for [the Shaikh's] persistent refusal to entertain our proposals, however lucrative and tempting on their merits, for the better administration of his Customs". However, continued Cox, since the Home Government had ruled out any question of coercion over the question of Customs reform, no quick solution to the problem could be expected.³

The Customs issue was not, in fact, resolved for some time. On the expiry of the banians' lease in January 1908, Shaikh ^cIsā appointed some of his officials to manage the Customs. Ironically, the revenue from the Customs improved and the possibility of the British forcing any change over the issue became more remote. The

1 Sec. to Govt. of India to Cox, F.D., 2 October 1906, No. 3903-E.B., L/P & S/10/81.

2 Heynssens to Cox, 17 October 1906, No. 4533, L/P & S/7/198.

3 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 December 1906, No. 2798, L/P & S/7/198.

manoeuvrings of the British to secure more control in Bahrain by taking control of the Customs had reached an impasse. However, the overall British objective still remained the same. If it was impossible to increase their control over Bahrain through the Customs issue, then some alternative road to the same objective had to be tried.

CHAPTER 7DIPLOMATIC ARRANGEMENTS AND REGIONAL EVENTS AFFECTING BAHRAIN 1905-15

There was little agreement in 1905-06 among British officials in Manāma, Bushire, Simla and London on how to progress towards the reform of the internal affairs of Bahrain, whilst insulating the British position in the Shaikhdom from outside interference at the same time. To take more control quickly would require coercion, but such action might be seized upon by other powers and produce undesirable effects elsewhere in the Gulf. Lord Lansdowne and Lord Curzon had demonstrated in 1903 that Britain's hard-won position in the Gulf would be maintained against the encroachments of Britain's imperial rivals. As part of this, the British reaction to the disturbances of 1904-05 in Bahrain showed also that their proteges would be kept in order. Yet the disturbances had provided an obvious reason for direct intervention. A new coercion would have no immediate pretext. The period 1905-06 began a search by the different British authorities for indirect methods which could best achieve reform.

In the following period, 1907-1915, the Bahrain problem was largely resolved, although the process was incomplete before the outbreak of the First World War, which drastically changed political conditions in the Gulf region. The indirect method which the British used was to include the various Bahrain issues in a comprehensive re-negotiation of Britain's political position in the Gulf in relation to those of her rivals. This re-negotiation produced diplomatic arrangements - of varying stability - with France, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Germany. An unsuccessful attempt at a settlement of the

Persian claim was also made, and Britain began to reconsider its attitude towards the Wahhabi power, which reappeared on the Hasā coast in 1913. As far as Bahrain itself was concerned in the context of these larger developments, the British formulated a unilateral document, an Order in Council¹, on which the British intended to rest their legal relationship with the Shaikhdom.

The development of a strengthened British position in the Gulf was not, however, affected merely by political and economic events in the region itself. During the period of the disturbances in Bahrain and the discussions about its future which followed, a gradual revolution in Britain's place in the political alignments of the world powers was already in progress. Larger considerations of imperial and European politics frequently altered the details or delayed the formulation of British Gulf policy. There was at this time, moreover, a shift in the influence of the various authorities responsible for British policy in Asia. Curzon had felt the increasing tendency for the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence to dominate the direction of Indian foreign affairs.² The decline in the weight of the views of the Government of India was not halted by Curzon's resignation, nor by the advent of the Liberal Government at the end of 1905. Lansdowne and the Conservatives had concluded the Japanese alliance in 1902 and the Entente with France in 1904 with

1 Orders in Council are instruments issued on behalf of the British Crown 'by and with the advice of H.M.'s Privy Council'. Orders in Council may be legislative, executive or judicial in effect. They are usually issued under powers conferred by statute and "may provide for anything from a colonial Constitution to the setting up of a government department". Norman Wilding and Philip Laundy, An Encyclopaedia of Parliament (London, 1958), pp. 458-59.

2 See for example, Curzon to Brodrick, 2 March and 20 April 1905, Nos. 21 and 33, Curzon Papers, F.111/164.

imperial strategy in mind. The emphasis was on reducing colonial tension and imperial responsibilities. The serious weakening of Russia, as a result of defeat in the war against Japan in 1905 and the revolution which followed, made a settlement of imperial differences between Britain and Russia more feasible. Anglo-French co-operation during the Moroccan crisis of 1905 also encouraged some form of Anglo-Russian accord.¹

The policies of Sir Edward Grey, the new Liberal Imperialist Foreign Secretary, were tending in the same directions as those of Lord Lansdowne, but with a different emphasis. Grey's views on worldwide relations between the Powers were more concerned with aspects of the balance of power in Europe, particularly in restraining the ambitions of Germany.² Germany competed vigorously with all her rivals in diplomacy and trade, but to British statesmen the growth of the German navy at the same time seemed particularly to threaten Britain alone.

Thus Grey's "chief motive in seeking a Russian entente was to change the balance of forces in Europe and in particular to create a counterpoise to Germany".³ Although the issues to be resolved were all Asian, the Viceroy, Lord Minto, and the Indian government were so

1 Monger, op. cit., Chapters 7 and 8; Lowe and Dockrill, op. cit., I, 5-15.

2 The anti-German feelings of influential and able officials in the Foreign Office, led by Charles Hardinge (later Viceroy of India, 1910-16), reinforced this emphasis. Monger, op. cit., pp. 264-66; Zara S. Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914 (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 86-117.

3 Monger, op. cit., p. 281.

opposed to an accord which would depend upon Russian promises that the Secretary of State for India, John Morley, had frequently to over-ride their views during the negotiations, from April 1906 to July 1907. Indeed, Charles Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, declared in July 1907 that "recently we have left the Government of India entirely out of our account, and the questions which have arisen have been treated directly between us and the India Office, ...".¹

The agreement with Russia covered Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia, but not the Gulf. The division of Persia into Russian, neutral, and British zones of influence were designed in part to keep Russia away from the Gulf physically. However, the subject of the status quo in the Gulf itself was not introduced into the negotiations until fairly late, in May 1907. The Russians objected because other powers would have to be consulted, and because they feared that a specific Russian affirmation of British special interests in the Gulf against other powers could only refer to Germany, which would take offence. The Russian refusal was so strong that the Liberals decided to make no mention of the Gulf directly in the Convention, which was signed on 31 August 1907. A parliamentary statement was published with the Convention, however, reaffirming the Lansdowne Declaration of 1903 and stating that the British government had no reason to believe that British special interests in the Gulf would give rise to difficulties between Britain and Russia.

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- 1 Quoted Ibid., p. 292. Morley felt that a settlement with Russia would relieve Indian finances. The War Office wanted a settlement partly because it could not provide sufficient reinforcements to India in a war with Russia.
 - 2 Busch, op. cit., pp. 357-69; Monger, op. cit., pp. 283-95; Rose L. Greaves, 'Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and its Workings in Persia, 1907-1914', Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol. 31 (1968), pt. 1, pp. 69-91.

Although Russian activities in Persia continued to cause friction, Russian rivalry in the Gulf faded into the background with the signing of the Convention. This made the rising challenge of Germany even more apparent. The prospect of the Baghdad railway was a continuing worry, and in 1906 German commercial competition produced a more immediate threat. In that year the Hamburg-Amerika steamship line began a regular service from Europe to the Gulf, with Wonckhaus's firm as its local agents. German rates were so low that British shipping companies suspected a government subsidy, but the German line was also somewhat more efficient and enterprising. Bahrain, for example, was not a regular port of call for British ocean steamers. The German line took advantage of this by making Bahrain a scheduled stop for their service. Combined with considerable activity by German consular officials in the region, the progress of German trade was so alarming that by 1909 Cox urged "the reality of the menace, which the prospect of permanent competition, commercial and political, by Germany in the Gulf signifies, and the vital importance to us of killing it in its infancy if it be possible, ...".¹

These developments in Britain's position worldwide and in the Gulf formed the background to the consideration of the British position in Bahrain in 1905-06, and the origin of the Order in Council which was proposed to clarify it. The question had first been raised on a minor matter in 1902. The Resident at the time, C.A. Kemball, had requested that Gaskin, the Assistant Political Agent at Bahrain, be given the

1 Cox to Grey, 12 May 1909, enclosing a Report on German Shipping and Trade in the Persian Gulf Region, by Vice-Consul H.G. Chick, L/P & S/10/109, register No. 1489. For the political activities of German officials, see Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 6 June 1908, L/P & S/7/217, register No. 1318.

power to perform the functions of a notary public. This could only be done by investing the Assistant Political Agent with consular powers, which would require the issue of a separate Order in Council for Bahrain and the southern shores of the Persian Gulf similar to the Persian Coasts and Islands Order for the Bushire residency. Kemball and the Government of India agreed, however, that the extension of full consular powers was undesirable merely to provide for notarial functions.¹

The issue arose again in October 1905, in regard to a more important subject, the administration of justice in Bahrain in cases in which European foreigners were concerned. The recently-appointed German Consul at Bushire, Dr. Listemann, approached Cox informally about the position of German subjects in Bahrain. The German Consul first sounded Cox on the foreign relations of Shaikh ^CIsā by asking if the British would object to a direct German approach to the Shaikh on behalf of a German subject in Bahrain. He was informed that this could not be accepted. According to the agreements of 1880 and 1892, the foreign relations of Bahrain were in British hands. In that case, Dr. Listemann asked, how much protection would the British give German subjects who were trading in Bahrain?²

Dr. Listemann, whether he realised it or not, was probing at a point of great sensitivity to the British. This had been shown in

1 Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 16 January 1902; Under Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Kemball, 6 May 1902; and Kemball to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 July 1902, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

1901 at the time when Wonckhaus had established himself in Bahrain. Officials in India had noted Britain's weak legal position in Bahrain regarding jurisdiction over foreign subjects. On the one hand, Shaikh ^CIsā was bound by the agreements he had entered into not to admit the Consular agencies of other nations without the approval of the British Government. On the other hand, the British Agent at Manāma did not claim jurisdiction in cases of disputes arising between Bahrainis and non-British foreigners. Such cases fell within the jurisdiction of the native Bahraini authorities. Foreign governments, and their subjects resident in Bahrain, were not likely to rate very highly the chances of receiving satisfaction from Bahraini courts in such cases. The Wonckhaus case of 1904 had already shown that these Governments would have an excellent pretext for causing embarrassment to the British over this issue. In fact, reported Cox, Dr. Listemann seemed to have the idea that "the interests of European merchants might be prejudiced by being submitted to the arbitration of a purely native tribunal".¹

In May 1901 the Government of India had tried to solve this problem by declaring that the Assistant Political Agent in Bahrain should, "as a matter of courtesy", extend his good offices to European foreigners in any disputes between them and the subjects of the Shaikh.² In 1906 Cox was able to use the same formula in an attempt to satisfy Dr. Listemann. He was also able to refer to the action taken by the

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 Under-Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Resident, 4 May 1901, L/P & S/7/133, register No. 614.

British authorities over the disturbance of September 1904 in Bahrain involving German subjects. If necessary, European foreigners in the Shaikhdom "should receive the same amount of protection as if they were British subjects, as had Mr. Bahnson at the time of the attack on him".¹

Even so, Cox's reassurances to Dr. Listemann were not wholly satisfactory. This was especially so over the arrangements existing in Bahrain for the settlement of commercial disputes. There existed for this purpose a majlis or permanent committee of native merchants. This institution had developed in the days when non-Europeans acted as Agents for the British in Bahrain. The majlis dated back to 1857 and was a Court of Arbitration. It functioned from the start with the assent of the Shaikh. Moreover, he was sometimes responsible for the selection of the members of this Court. If the circumstances of the case demanded, then the Assistant Political Agent would, either alone or in consultation with the Shaikh, choose the members of the Court himself. In fact, the Assistant Political Agent acted as convenor and supervisor of the majlis, which normally conducted its business at the Agency itself. In 1906 the position of the Agent vis-a-vis the Court was described as "more analogous to that of a Judge Advocate than a Court of Appeal".²

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 'Memorandum regarding the Bahrein majlis or permanent Native Court of Arbitration', 25 February 1906, enclosure in Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, No. 76, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053. A Judge Advocate is a person appointed to sit on a Court Martial as legal adviser. His duties are to advise the Court on all points of law and procedure, to keep the record of the proceedings and to sum up.

Even this degree of British involvement with the majlis, however, was not likely to satisfy foreign nationals in Bahrain. The British themselves were obliged to admit that "where none of the litigants were British subjects entitled to British protection", the Assistant Political Agent had "really no locus standi".¹ Moreover, the representatives of Wonckhaus's firm in Bahrain had never given up their claim to extra-territoriality in the Shaikhdom (i.e. to be not subject to Bahrain courts). The Political Agent, Captain Prideaux, considered that these merchants would certainly refuse to go before the Shaikh's tribunals. Moreover, if the British were to say that the majlis was a Territorial Court, the German merchants would perhaps object even to that. The alternative course of declaring that the majlis was a Court which the Protecting Power, in consultation with the Shaikh, had evolved for the settlement of disputes in which British subjects, or Europeans claiming British good offices, were concerned, would give the Germans an opening to ask the British to define their position in Bahrain more precisely.²

As a temporary measure Cox, on 14 February 1906, in an interview with Shaikh ^CIsā, asked the ruler informally to agree that, in the event of a European foreigner not being satisfied with a settlement made by the majlis, its finding should be subject to modification by the Political Agent in consultation with himself, Shaikh ^CIsā. To this, the ruler of Bahrain agreed.³

1 Ibid.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, No. 76, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

3 Ibid.

European foreigners in Bahrain, however, were not the only concern in regard to jurisdiction at this time. In January 1906 a Persian subject committed a criminal offence, theft, on board a British ship in the harbour of Bahrain. As the subject of a power with claims to Bahrain, the Persian offender had declared himself to be outside the jurisdiction of Shaikh ^CIsā's courts.¹ On receiving notification of the problem from Prideaux, Cox decided it would be advisable to contact the Government of India regarding the broader issues raised by the case.

It seemed to Cox that three courses were possible in disposing of the Persian's case. The first possibility was that Shaikh ^CIsā might be left to deal with it. In this event, however, the reaction of the Persian community in Bahrain would no doubt be similar to that of the German traders if threatened with the Shaikh's jurisdiction. They would appeal to their own Government, just as they had when, in November 1904, the assault on Persian residents in Manāma by Shaikh Ali's men had occurred.²

The second possibility was that the Assistant Political Agent could send the offender to the Bushire Residency for the disposal of his case. As Cox pointed out, however, such a proceeding would be "an indirect pronouncement to the effect that Persians were withdrawn altogether from the jurisdiction of the Sheikh of Bahrein, and were also not justiceable in criminal matters by the British representative".

1 Prideaux to Cox, 26 January 1906, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 See Chapter 5, p. 242.

Moreover, "such a ruling would embrace the case of all foreigners in Bahrein".¹

The third possible course of action would be for the Political Agent to ask the prisoner if he consented to submitting to his jurisdiction and, if he did, he might be sentenced and punished under the Agent's supervision. This was the course favoured by Cox. Even he admitted, however, that his suggestion was by no means wholly satisfactory. The fact that it was proposed to ask for the consent of the offender to the jurisdiction of the Assistant Political Agent would naturally suggest that there was some doubt as to the right of Britain's representative in Manāma to deal with such cases.

It had become clear to Cox, from the case of the Persian offender and the enquiries of the Germans over Bahrain, that it was necessary to put the powers of the Political Agent on a more satisfactory basis. In his letter of 25 February 1906 he therefore recommended that the question of the issue of an Order in Council for Bahrain should be reconsidered.

Cox clearly felt that "the gradual influx of Europeans"² into the Shaikhdom had created a new situation for the British in Bahrain. In the past the disposal of cases like that of the Persian offender had presented little practical difficulty. By 1906, however,

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 March 1906, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 25 February 1906, No. 76, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

"the critical vigilance of foreigners and agents of foreign representatives" made it advisable "to shape our procedure as far as possible on lines which will pass hostile criticism should any be offered".¹

Cox was not alone in his concern about the 'critical vigilance of foreigners' regarding the case of the Persian offender. In February E. Grant-Duff, Britain's representative in Tehran, informed the Foreign Office that it was "undesirable to raise the question of jurisdiction here". Grant-Duff also requested instructions as to how the offender should be dealt with.² The reason why it was undesirable for the question of the powers of the Political Agent in Bahrain to be raised was that the British did not want to admit that they were unable to point to any written agreement giving their Agent such rights in the Shaikhdom. Thus, on 6 April 1906, the Political Committee of the India Office noted that, if the Political Agent were to claim the right to deal with the case of the Persian, it would be less open to question if he did so by reference to authority delegated by Shaikh ^CIsā rather than on the basis of being the representative of the protecting power.³

The Foreign Office pointed out that, whilst it might be true that no objections would be raised in Bahrain to the Persian offender being tried by the Political Agent, there was the possibility that the

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- 1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 4 March 1906, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.
 - 2 Grant-Duff to Foreign Office, 20 February 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/3/420, register No. 2684.
 - 3 Comment by Political Committee, 6 April 1906, L/P & S/7/186, register No. 677.

Persian Government might object. It was true that that Government was well aware of British protection of Bahrain which, in fact, had been brought to the attention of Persia as recently as the previous February.¹ It seemed undesirable, however, to raise at that moment a question of jurisdiction which might involve "discussion and controversy". The Foreign Office therefore suggested that the Government of India should be asked to give further information about the case with a view to seeing whether it might be dealt with "in some more convenient manner".²

The India Office agreed to this proposal³, but the Government of India reported on 22 May 1906 that the stolen property had been restored. In view of this, and of the two months' imprisonment already suffered by the offender, it was proposed that the bail bond should be cancelled and no further action taken in the matter.⁴ The Foreign Office and the India Office were quick to agree.⁵

At about this time, however, further cases arose which raised the question of British intervention in the conduct of affairs in Bahrain. In April 1906 Prideaux reported his opinion that Shaikh ^cIsā, if allowed his own way, would soon drive the small Jewish

- 1 See Grant-Duff to Mushir-ed-Dowleh, 19 February 1906, L/P & S/3/420, register No. 2648.
- 2 Foreign Office to India Office, 27 April 1906, L/P & S/3/422, register No. 2954.
- 3 Sec. of State for India, to Viceroy, 1 May 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/3/422.
- 4 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 22 May 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/7/188, register No. 926.
- 5 Foreign Office to India Office, 8 June 1906, and Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 13 June 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/3/423, register No. 3120.

community out of Manāma by the extortions to which he was resorting as a result of "his present unhappy pecuniary condition".

Shaikh ʿĪsā had complained to Prideaux that the Jews had refused to pay their taxes, had declared themselves not to be Bahrain subjects and had been disregarding a local edict prohibiting the making, drinking and selling of wine.¹

Later, Shaikh ʿĪsā had informed Prideaux that he claimed the right, along with the other "rulers of the world", to impose special taxes on the Jews and to expel them from the island should they refuse to pay them. Prideaux, after investigating the matter, believed that Shaikh ʿĪsā's allegations against the Jews were very largely, if not wholly, without foundation. Moreover, his harassment of the community was of "considerable importance from an international point of view". The Bahrain Jews had considerable business dealings with the European, Hindu and other local merchants, so that their expulsion from Bahrain might well cause considerable inconvenience to the mercantile community. Further, all the adult Jews were foreigners by birth, mostly Turks and Persians, and informed Prideaux that they had no intention of settling permanently in Bahrain. The Turkish and Persian governments would have strong grounds for objecting to their Jewish subjects in Bahrain "being treated as badly as are the subjects of the Chief himself". Prideaux therefore recommended that all foreign Jews be considered entitled to the protection of the British Agency and exempt from the jurisdiction of the qādīs. This was necessary because the latter were not permitted by their religious

1 Prideaux to Cox, 20 April 1906, No. 29, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1351.

code to accept the testimony of a Jew against that of a Muslim. The Shaikh should also be told that all domiciled Jews were similarly exempt from the jurisdiction of the qādis, and would be granted British good offices even though their cases would not be tried in the Agency but by the secular officials of Shaikh ^CIsā alone. Prideaux also stated that it was his personal opinion that the Bahrain Jews would make things easier and more secure for themselves if they paid "some form of tribute annually to the Chief". If this principle was conceded, however, Prideaux felt obliged to warn that similar claims would be made against "the Persians and other foreigners, including British subjects, who are annually flocking to Bahrein in growing numbers".¹

Cox himself arrived in the Shaikhdom on 27 April and spoke to the ruler. The line taken by Shaikh ^CIsā on the status of the Bahrain Jews, reported Cox, was that they were "as a race subjected to special taxation and treatment by civilized Governments" such as those of the Turkish Sultan and by the Russian Tsar. For guidance in his affairs, Cox replied, it was the Shaikh's duty to look not "in the directions quoted by him" but to the wishes and policy of the Government of India. Under the administration of that Government, Jews were on exactly the same footing as other communities and were subject to no special impositions.²

Cox took the opportunity to link the issue of the Jews with the more general one of the right of the British Government to intervene

1 Prideaux to Cox, 20 April 1906, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1351.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 30 April 1906, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1351.

in the internal affairs of Bahrain. The Resident claimed that the position of the native Christians in Bahrain was analogous to that of the Jews. In both cases, he suggested, the British might perhaps give the same degree of protection as that extended to Persians, the nature of which was still under the consideration of the Government. Since the crisis of the previous year, Shaikh ^CIsā had not taken exception to the disposal by Prideaux, in communication with the Shaikh's officials, of cases in which Persians were concerned. Finally, Cox warned, inconvenient issues like the present case were "the inevitable corollary of the enhancement of the status of our representative at Bahrain". Such issues made clearer "the inconveniences resulting from the undefined position at present occupied by the British Government in relation to the Shaikh and the administration of the islands".¹

The Government of India approved Prideaux's proposals that Shaikh ^CIsā should be told that foreign Jews in Bahrain were entitled to British protection and that both they, and all domiciled Jews, were exempt from the jurisdiction of the qādīs.²

It is important to note that the Government of India were more willing to support their servants in the Gulf in their intervention in the internal affairs of Bahrain when foreign nationals, rather than subjects of Shaikh ^CIsā, were involved. In fact, in April 1906, another case of what Cox and Prideaux regarded as a matter for British

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 30 April 1906, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1351.

2 Under-Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 17 July 1906, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1351.

intervention in Bahraini affairs occurred. Since the case involved a Bahraini subject, however, the reaction of the Government of India was not what it had been in the affair of the harassment of the Jews. A Bahraini convict had died as a result of the execution of a sentence of mutilation passed by Shaikh ^CIsā. On 17 April 1906 Cox had reported to the Government of India that Prideaux had recommended that the Shaikh be informed that this type of punishment should cease if he wished "to be considered worthy of our protection". Cox considered that, whatever might be the case elsewhere in the Gulf area, at Bahrain, where there was "an increasing European population", Prideaux should inform Shaikh ^CIsā that "now that Manama was becoming a civilised port" it was time that "the more primitive features of Arab Government were modified".¹

The Government of India were prepared to allow the Political Agent to communicate informally with Shaikh ^CIsā with a view to his "gradually adopting more humane methods of governing his people". It was considered, however, that it was essential not to go "too fast in imposing reforms on semi-civilised states" since "the necessities of their administration" were completely different from those of British government.²

It was not until 14 November 1907 that the Government of India presented their recommendations on the subject of the judicial powers

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 27 April 1906, No. 958, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1236.

2 Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 25 June 1906, L/P & S/7/190, register No. 1236.

exercised by the Political Agent in Bahrain. The Government of India began by reviewing the extent of these powers. The Agent had the powers of a magistrate in respect of offences committed by British Indian subjects in Bahrain and the Arab coast of the Gulf. As a result of a decision by the India Office of 21 June 1901¹, he also extended his good offices to European foreigners in any disputes between them and the Shaikh of Bahrain or his subjects. In cases in which the accused was a Bahraini subject or a foreigner preferring not to make use of British good offices and in which the other party was a British or foreign subject who did so, the Agent held a court composed of himself and a representative of the Shaikh. Finally, he controlled a local court of arbitration for the adjustment of civil dispute between British subjects and proteges on the one hand, and Bahrainis or persons of any other nationality on the other. Though, strictly speaking, he had no legal authority to do so, the Agent also occasionally issued bills of health, signed marine protests and legalised signatures on behalf of British Indian subjects.²

The Government of India requested the issue of an Order in Council for Bahrain. This would be a means of defining and regularising the powers exercised over British subjects by the Agent since, by an Order in Council, Bahrain could be declared to be a territory in which such jurisdiction was exercised on behalf of the King by the Government of India. This was not, however, the only reason why that Government wanted an Order in Council for Bahrain.

1 See Chapter 4, p. 214.

2 Govt. of India, to Sec. of State for India, 14 November 1907, Secret No. 188, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

Foreign shipping and foreign interest generally in the Gulf were increasing, there had been established in Bahrain foreign firms and missions. All this had, for some time, been causing the Government of India what they described as "practical difficulties". It therefore seemed desirable to them that, "in maintenance of the status quo in the Gulf", provision should be made in the Order in Council for the exercise by the Political Agent of jurisdiction over foreigners in Bahrain, "before foreign interests have so largely developed as to render the assumption of the legal duties of a protecting power a matter of greater intricacy and difficulty involving perhaps ... diplomatic representations to foreign powers". In the opinion of the Government of India, the "treaty" with Bahrain of 1880 constituted "a sort of protectorate, which has perhaps been ripened into maturity by the open and regular exercise of protectorate powers", especially in the cases of the attacks on Persian and German subjects in the Shaikhdom in 1904. Furthermore, France, Germany and America had all received informal notice of the existence of "a British protectorate over Bahrain", whilst Persia and Turkey had been told formally. The despatch ended with a request that the proposed Order in Council should be framed so as to enable the Political Agent to perform the functions of a notary public.¹

When the proposal reached London, S.G. Sale, the Legal Adviser at the India Office, commented that he could see no objection to an Order in Council providing for the exercise of jurisdiction over British subjects by the Political Agent and for his performing the

1 Ibid.

functions of a Notary Public. The question whether the proposed Order in Council should also provide for the exercise of jurisdiction over foreign subjects was, however, more difficult and seemed to depend on political considerations. It could only be done, the Legal Adviser considered, by the consent, expressed or implied, of the Powers over whose subjects it was proposed to extend this jurisdiction.¹

The Secretary of State for India agreed with Sale that the difficulty was the question of jurisdiction over foreigners. In a letter of 18 January 1908 to the Foreign Secretary communicating the recommendations of the Government of India, he stated that he assumed that British protection over Bahrain was a fact and that it was "desirable to publish it in due course by taking such public action as was suggested" by the Government of India. The question was whether the present opportunity was favourable to the adoption of this course and whether it was not preferable to "continue action on the above assumption until a long usage had been established". The latter had been the view taken by the India Office in November 1905.² It was possible, however, that the Foreign Office might consider that "recent developments of the situation in the Gulf" required a "definite public notification of the rights that His Majesty's Government possess and intend to exercise as the protecting Power in Bahrein". Regarding the notifications which had been made to foreign powers about British protection over Bahrain to which the Government of India had referred, the India Office noted that the Turks had never accepted "the

1 Note of S.G. Sale, Legal Adviser at the India Office, 9 December 1907, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 See Chapter 6, p. 275.

declaration of our Protectorate" which had been repeatedly made to them. Further, the Persians had not formally recognised the right of the Resident at Bushire to use his good offices on behalf of the subjects of the Shaikh of Bahrain.¹

The reply of the Foreign Office accepted the principle of a provision in the proposed Order in Council for jurisdiction by the Political Agent over British subjects. As far as the question of jurisdiction over foreigners and the regularisation of "the British Protectorate over Bahrein" were concerned, the Foreign Secretary was "disposed to take any well-considered steps with regard to the consolidation of our protectorate". It was suggested, however, that no action should be taken in the matter until there had been formulated the recommendations of a committee which it had been proposed to set up to consider British policy on the Gulf.² The India Office agreed.

The purposes for calling the committee were German determination to push forward their exclusive scheme for the Baghdad railway without any recognition of British interest in controlling the southern portions of the line in Mesopotamia, and the increasing threat of vigorous German economic competition in the Gulf. The conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention in August 1907 had left Germany as Britain's most formidable rival in the Middle East, and at the same time had cleared the way for consideration of British negotiations with

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 18 January 1908 (draft as approved by Political Committee), L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2053.

2 Foreign Office to India Office, 4 February 1908, No. 2218, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 2781.

Germany, Turkey and the other Powers over the railway question.¹

Therefore a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was convened to consider developments in the region, and British attitudes towards them. It consisted of representatives from the Board of Trade, War Office, and Admiralty as well as the Foreign Office and India Office. John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, was its chairman. Its seven meetings were held in March 1908.

The terms of reference of the Gulf Sub-Committee were:²

To consider the effect that the completion of the Baghdad Railway may have on the situation - strategical, political and commercial - in Southern Persia and the Persian Gulf, and the measures that it may be necessary to take in advance for the maintenance of British interests in those regions, either immediately or after the railway has reached Baghdad.

Before the Sub-Committee was a memorandum on the Gulf which had been prepared by the Foreign Office in February 1908.³ It reviewed British political interests and economic conditions in the geographical areas around the Gulf and Muscat. The relationship of the British Government with those Arab tribes along the southern and western coasts of the Gulf which had signed formal agreements with that government was described by the memorandum as "a sort of veiled Protectorate".⁴

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- 1 For a detailed analysis on the context of British policy toward Mesopotamia and the railway, see Stuart A. Cohen, British Policy in Mesopotamia 1903-1914 (London, 1976), Chapters 2 and 3. From January to October the British Political Agent at Kuwait, Major S.G. Knox, had negotiated a lease from Shaikh Mubarak of the land which could be used as a terminus if the railway should proceed as far as Kuwait: Busch, op. cit., pp. 308-10.
 - 2 Report and Proceedings of a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the Baghdad Railway; Southern Persia, and the Persian Gulf, secret, 26 January 1909, Cab 16/10 (hereafter "Gulf Sub-Committee Report"), p. vi.
 - 3 The Memorandum was printed as Appendix 2 to the Gulf Sub-Committee Report.
 - 4 Foreign Office Memorandum, 12 February 1908, Appendix 2, Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 127.

As far as Bahrain itself was concerned, however, it was stated that it had become a matter for serious consideration whether the time had not arrived "to regularize the position" there "by a more definite assertion of British predominance". The Government of India in its despatch of 14 November 1907 had, the memorandum pointed out, set forth the arguments in favour of the exercise of jurisdiction by the Political Agent over foreigners. It was a question for consideration, however, "whether it would not be more practicable and be less likely to evoke hostile comment if the assumption of these duties (which would probably necessitate a notification to foreign Powers) were accompanied by various administrative reforms". These, if carried out under British control, should encourage trade, check the arms traffic and help to put Shaikh ^ḤIsā's finances on a better footing. It was regrettable that the replacement of the Native Agent, Agha Muhammad Rahīm, by a British Agent in 1900 had produced "no substantial improvement" as far as these desirable reforms were concerned. This failure was even more unsatisfactory since the state of the internal affairs of a Shaikhdom known to be under British protection had attracted the adverse comment of the subjects of foreign Powers.

It is clear that, as far as the drafters of the Foreign Office memorandum were concerned, the greater control over Bahrain which the Government of India had proposed would be more acceptable to foreign Powers if it could first be shown more clearly that British protection over the Shaikhdom had been beneficial to commerce in general. The future growth of trade in Bahrain depended on the undertaking of public works such as providing harbour accommodation and a pier.¹

1 Large vessels unloading at Bahrain had to anchor some two miles from the shore and there discharge into lighters. Report by C.E. Akers to Board of Trade, March 1909, L/P & S/3/449, register No. 3285.

For such undertakings to be practicable it was necessary for the finances of the Shaikh to be reformed. Nothing had so far come of the negotiations for the control of the Customs of Bahrain and it was a matter for consideration whether Shaikh ^CIsā should be offered a large subsidy in return for British control of the Customs. It would greatly promote the commercial interests of the Shaikhdom, the memorandum stated, if a free port under the control of a British commissioner could be established there.¹

The questions about the future of Bahrain were placed by the memorandum in the wider context of the defence of British ascendancy in the Gulf as a whole against Germany. The attempts of the Germans to push their interests in the Gulf area had been so vigorous that there was reason to fear a decline in British influence, "first commercial, but eventually political". This process would be accelerated if the Baghdad Railway was completed under German auspices alone. It seemed, accordingly, that the time had come for the substitution of "a policy of constructive action" for one which was defensive in character and limited to a declaration that the British Government would forcibly resist any attempt to establish a fortified base in the Gulf.² It was considered practically certain that the Germans would not attempt to challenge Britain directly in this way. A policy of "gradual commercial absorption" was far more likely. It would not give scope for legitimate protests by the British Government. At the same time, the history of the Gulf had demonstrated that

1 Foreign Office Memorandum, 12 February 1908, Gulf Sub-Committee Report, pp. 146-47.

2 Foreign Office Memorandum, 12 February 1908, Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 187.

"commercial prosperity inevitably leads to political hegemony". It was therefore a matter of "grave consideration" whether, on political grounds, "exceptional measures" should be taken to encourage British trade in the Gulf and to thwart the attempt to undermine Britain's commercial ascendancy there.

The concern of the Gulf Sub-Committee about the penetration of German commerce was reflected in the detailed tables of statistics on the share of different countries in the trade of the Gulf which were appended to the report of the Sub-Committee. Between 1895 and 1906, the value of goods imported into the Gulf from Germany had grown from £66,000 to £179,000. It is true that, even by 1906, imports from Germany were dwarfed by those from the United Kingdom, India and other British possessions, which totalled, £3,421,000.¹ Even so, the rate of increase of German imports, approaching 200 per cent in eleven years, was ominous. In the same period, imports from the United Kingdom and the Empire had grown by only about ten per cent. Moreover, other statistics indicated that the same tendency was at work. From 1895 to 1906, the tonnage of German shipping entering the principal ports of the Gulf rose from 6,497 to 83,767, whilst for British shipping the figures were 702,158 and 1,684,785 respectively.²

At the first meeting of the Gulf Sub-Committee, on 2 March 1908,

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- 1 'Trade and Shipping of the Persian Gulf', Annex (a), Section (C), Appendix 8 of Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 252.
 - 2 'Shipping in the Persian Gulf', Section (C), Appendix 8 of Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 258. These figures were compiled from Consular reports.

the question of Bahrain was raised during the evidence of Sir Richmond Ritchie, the Secretary of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office. Ritchie stated his opinion that the provisions of the agreements which the Shaikh of Bahrain had in the past signed with the British Government constituted "a quasi-Protectorate". Ritchie described how, at the time of the assaults on Persian and German subjects in Bahrain in 1904, the British had "walked in and restored law and order". The Germans had not protested over it. Further, Ritchie said, the Persians had actually invoked British assistance. That, and the British action at Zubāra in 1895, in the opinion of Lloyd-George, "look[ed] like effective jurisdiction".¹

The real question was not, however, whether the British had effective jurisdiction in practice. As Ritchie pointed out, what was under consideration was the proposal of the Government of India that legally defensible jurisdiction over foreigners should be obtained by means of the issue of an Order in Council. Such a measure would, thought Ritchie, entail making "a communication" to the foreign Powers concerned. It was precisely this consideration which had made the India Office hesitant about accepting the recommendations made in the Government of India's despatch. At this point in the Sub-Committee's cross-examination of Ritchie, Morley made clear his doubts about the wisdom of accepting those recommendations. He now asked what would be the "precise gain" of passing an Order in Council providing for jurisdiction over foreigners. He had never felt, he declared, that the Government of India had shown what the precise

1 Cross-examination of Ritchie, 2 March 1908, Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 10.

gain would be.¹

Ritchie was prepared to tell him. The measure would be greatly to Britain's advantage.²

At present in every step we take at Bahrein we are haunted by the dread: What will Turkey say? what will Persia say? and Germany? what will Mr. Wonckhaus say? and what will the pearl-dealers say? They all have the right of direct access to the Sheikh to get him to settle their difficulties, and our Political Officer does not always necessarily know what passes between the Sheikh and these foreigners. He has to find out before he can give effective advice to the Sheikh - that is, effective in the sense of British interests.

In reply to the queries of Grey and Lloyd-George about the likelihood of Shaikh ^ḤIsā being willing to give up his right to jurisdiction over foreigners, Ritchie stated that he understood that this would be less of a problem than "the intimation to the foreign Powers". Until such an intimation was made "we have not", considered Ritchie, "really got a Protectorate in the sense that we desire a Protectorate, that is to say, the first thing we do may be challenged". If such a challenge was made, would the Government be in a position to say, "we have done this because of the Protectorate which we informed you we were exercising; or are we to wait until we are challenged and then say, Oh!! yes, but we have a Protectorate?"³

Ritchie seemed to consider that the latter alternative was out of the question. Grey, however, was of a different opinion. He considered it "rather a provocative business to send a Circular to

1 Cross-examination of Ritchie, 2 March 1908, Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 11.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

other Powers saying we have got a Protectorate over Bahrain". British claims to a protectorate would have to be based on the agreements of 1880 and 1892. In that case, on receipt of the circular, the Powers would demand to know why the British Government had not proclaimed the protectorate earlier. They would, thought Grey, say "'Why have you, a propos of nothing, suddenly told us you have got a Protectorate over Bahrein, which you say you have had for twenty eight years?'". It was far better to let the issue arise through their challenging some British action and then to reply, "'This Treaty has been in existence for twenty-eight years, and it has been known to everybody, and we cannot possibly think of discussing it'".¹

As far as the issue of an Order in Council itself was concerned, Grey seemed to have no objections, provided that the Shaikh would make no trouble about giving up his jurisdiction over foreigners. On this point Grey's counsel seems to have been accepted by the rest of the Sub-Committee. Their examination of Ritchie on Bahrain was more or less ended when Grey stated that he

should have thought it was that we agree that the Treaties we have got with Bahrein would support the action which the Government of India desire to take as against any foreign objections, but that they do not appear to give us the right to do this without the consent of the Sheikh, and it would be necessary for the Government of India first to arrange matters with the Sheikh before any Order in Council is issued.²

When, on 17 March 1908, Sir Louis Dane, the Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Government of India, was cross-examined by

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 17.

the Sub-Committee, Morley asked Dane whether the Government of India had "proposed to make our position stronger by establishing a British jurisdiction over foreigners". Dane had replied that the Government of India "would rather put it by bringing to the notice of foreigners the fact that we do exercise a jurisdiction". It was hoped that an Order in Council would be issued to make the matter perfectly clear. The Government of India were "proceeding in the informal sort of way that we generally do", but the time had now come "to put ourselves on a more legal footing". Shaikh ^ḤIsā, Dane informed the Sub-Committee, was prepared to allow the Political Agent to deal with all cases involving foreigners. There was no problem whatever about the Shaikh yielding his right to such jurisdiction. What the Government of India was afraid of was that their jurisdiction might very easily be challenged, thus causing "a very awkward conflict". If the Order in Council could be issued before any serious case occurred, however, the Government of India would be in a stronger position to meet any objection. Dane added that he considered that Britain's position in Bahrain was, in fact, a very strong one, "thanks to the Germans and Persians themselves".¹

When Grey took over the questioning of Dane from Morley, he asked directly whether the Political Agent actually exercised jurisdiction over foreigners in Bahrain. Dane informed him that, as far as civil cases were concerned, practically all of them were dealt with by the Political Agent. In recent years nearly every criminal case had been made over to the Agent by Shaikh ^ḤIsā. At Grey's prompting, Dane

1 Cross-examination of Dane, 17 March 1908, Gulf Sub-Committee Report, p. 61.

agreed that the problem was to discover the best way to let other Powers know that the British Political Agent in Bahrain already exercised this jurisdiction there. The objective was to achieve this "before there was any conflict". When Grey asked why the Government of India wanted an Order in Council, Dane told him that they were "afraid that our position may be challenged, and it would look worse to assert it by an Order in Council after the dispute had arisen than it would beforehand".¹

The final report of the Sub-Committee stated that the British Government exercised "a virtual Protectorate" over Bahrain. The British position in the Shaikhdome would be strengthened, however, and the "risks of interference by foreign Powers other than Turkey or Persia" removed if jurisdiction over foreigners in Bahrain were placed in British hands. The Sub-Committee recommended that Shaikh ^CĪsā should be asked to make a request to be relieved of the responsibility of exercising jurisdiction over foreigners. If this approach to the Shaikh proved successful, an Order in Council should be drawn up. The Sub-Committee did not consider, however, that it was expedient to make the Order in Council "a medium of formally declaring a Protectorate". Neither Turkey nor Persia had formally abandoned its claims to Bahrain and the Persian Government had not even recognized Britain's right to protect Bahrainis in Persian territory.² Considering "the present political conditions of Turkey and Persia" it was advisable that the British Government "should scrupulously avoid any action that could be represented as an attempt to utilize their difficulties for selfish

1 Ibid., p. 62.

2 An instance of this refusal had occurred at the time when, in March 1908, the Sub-Committee had been conducting its deliberations. See Marling to Grey, 16 March 1908 (tel.), L/P & S/10/82, register No. 2944.

purposes". There was also the risk that, if a Protectorate were formally declared, this might be considered by Powers other than Turkey and Persia as a challenge. They might therefore "raise the question of our rights in a provocative form".¹

The report of the Gulf Sub-Committee was endorsed by the Committee of Imperial Defence at its 101st meeting on 25 February 1909. The India Office then prepared a despatch to the Government of India which followed the recommendations of the Gulf Sub-Committee.² The despatch was sent on 21 May 1909. Quoting the report, it pointed out that the British Government had concluded that, since the foundation of British political ascendancy in the Gulf was commercial predominance, purely political action, not having the aim of developing Britain's commercial interests, should be avoided. Such action would be likely to arouse the suspicions of other Powers. The proposals which the Government of India had made for the extension of the jurisdiction of the Political Agent at Bahrain, however, fell "within the lines of policy approved by His Majesty's Government". The adoption of these proposals would be one more stage in the development of Britain's "virtual protectorate" over the Shaikhdom. The despatch then repeated the reasons why the recommendation of an Order in Council was accepted and why it was not considered expedient to make the Order in Council a means of formally declaring a protectorate. The Government of India was asked to have the Shaikh approached for a request to be relieved of responsibility for jurisdiction over foreigners. To provide for

1 Gulf Sub-Committee Report, 26 January 1909, pp. ix-x.

2 India Office to Foreign Office, 28 April 1909, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 3227.

"any local peculiarities that may require consideration", the first draft of the Order in Council should be prepared by the Government of India.¹

On 31 July 1909 Cox informed the Government of India that Prideaux had secured from Shaikh ^ḤIsā the necessary request that he should be relieved of responsibility for exercising jurisdiction over foreigners.² The Shaikh had, however, insisted on adding a reservation. He asked that the British authorities should exercise authority in cases in which foreigners only were concerned. In cases occurring between foreigners and Bahraini subjects, it was necessary, said Shaikh ^ḤIsā, that they should be settled by himself and the Political Agent jointly.³ The effect of the reservation, in Cox's opinion, was simply to put foreigners on the same footing as British subjects who had disputes with Bahraini subjects. No exception need be taken to it.⁴

The political condition of Turkey referred to in the Gulf Sub-Committee's report had undergone several developments in the course of the year between the Sub-Committee's meetings and the endorsement of the report by the Committee of Imperial Defence. These developments were to have a considerable influence on the course of the Baghdad railway negotiations, on the politics of the ^Ḥasā coast region and

1 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 21 May 1909, No. 11, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 3377.

2 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 31 July 1909, L/P & S/10/28, register No. 1314.

3 Shaikh ^ḤIsā to Captain C.F. Mackenzie, Political Agent, Bahrain, 16 July 1909, L/P & S/10/28.

4 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 31 July 1909, L/P & S/10/28.

Bahrain itself, and on the timing of the Order in Council for Bahrain. The "Young Turks" revolution of July 1908 began with a phase of Liberal spirit which seemed favourable to British interests over Mesopotamian issues, because of a corresponding decline in the influence of Germany, the supporter of the Sultan, at Constantinople. However, the deposition of Abdul Hamid in April 1909 brought a strongly nationalistic group of young Turks to the fore. They recognised that the railway could assist in pushing a policy of "Ottomanisation" and pan-Turkish nationalism into the Arab portions of their empire. While Germany was willing to meet British objections by granting Britain a share in the lower portion of the railway, the new Turkish government was less willing to see Britain control such a vital part of Turkish communications. Britain pressed its position further by presenting an alternative Mesopotamian railway proposal with far-reaching economic implications, and held over the nearly bankrupt Turks the threat of refusing to approve an increase in Turkish customs unless the concession was granted. British objectives in defending their position in the region thus remained constant, but the Turks responded with new moves to assert their pretensions in the Gulf, which fitted in with aggressive pan-Islamic and pan-Turkish activities elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire.¹

In March 1909 the Turkish mudīr of ^cUqair landed with some soldiers on Zakhnuniyya, an unproductive island about ten miles south-east of ^cUqair, and hoisted the Turkish flag. Dawāsir tribesmen,

1 Edward Mead Earle, Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Baghdad Railway (New York, 1923, reprinted 1966), pp. 217-24; J.B. Wolf, The Diplomatic History of the Baghdad Railroad (Missouri, 1936, reprinted, New York, 1973), pp. 54-60; Cohen, op. cit., pp. 97-101; Busch, op. cit., pp. 313-16.

subjects of the Shaikh of Bahrain, were in the habit of visiting the island during the winter months, and Shaikh Ali, Shaikh ^ḤIsā's father, had built a fort on it fifty years before. The Turkish official tried to persuade the Dawāsir to raise the flag daily, but they declined. Shaikh ^ḤIsā protested the Turkish action, and Cox recommended that the Shaikh be allowed to fly his flag on Zakhnuniyya during the winter, and that a protest should be lodged at Constantinople.¹ The India Office observed that the action of the mudīr raised two questions, the limits of Turkish jurisdiction on the coast which the British did not recognise south of ^ḤUqair, and the British protectorate over Bahrain. It urged that the latter issue not be raised in the protest, and recognised that it was not a convenient time for making any representations to the Porte. Since the guards were withdrawn, the Political Agent at Bahrain was instructed in October 1909 not to allow Shaikh ^ḤIsā to fly his flag on Zakhnuniyya, which would needlessly disturb the status quo.²

The Turkish guards returned, however, in March 1910. The Political Agent at Bahrain, Captain C.F. Mackenzie, discovered on a visit to Zakhnuniyya that the Dawāsir, in an awkward position, were flying either the Bahrain or Turkish flags, as the situation demanded. Reliefs for the guards continued to visit the island, and the Turkish flag was flown on Fridays.³

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- 1 Prideaux to Cox, 4 April 1909; Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 2 May 1909; Major A.P. Trevor, First Assistant Resident, to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 28 November 1909, L/P & S/10/162, register No. 3267; Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 23 May 1909 (tel.), L/P & S/10/162, register No. 3504.
 - 2 India Office to Foreign Office, 26 May 1909; Govt. of India, F.D., to Resident, 7 June 1909 (tel.), R/15/2/25.
 - 3 Capt. C.F. Mackenzie to Cox, 6 May 1910 R/15/2/25; Mackenzie to Cox, 17 June 1910, L/P & S/10/162, register No. 3267.

The British Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Gerald Lowther, linked this continued defiance of British protests with a larger pattern of Turkish aggression. He reviewed the harassment of British diplomatic establishments in Turkish Arabia, the appointment of a new mudīr for ^CUdaid, activity in the Balkans, and the general tone of Young Turk aspirations and revival of Ottoman power. He urged a comprehensive treatment of the outstanding Anglo-Turkish disputes in the Gulf region. Turkish officials in Basra soon put pressure on the Shaikh of Kuwait over properties owned near Fao, and bombarded a town belonging to the Shaikh of Muhammara. It was further reported that mudīrs had been named for Wakra and Zubāra. By December, Cox was urging either comprehensive settlement, or else coercive measures to remove Turkish military posts at Bida^C, Bubiyaⁿ and Umm Qasr near Kuwait, and Zakhnuniyya.¹

The Foreign Office cautioned that it would be futile to remove the signs of Turkish authority on land, for they would simply put them back, and that Britain's diplomatic position was possibly not strong enough now to force the Turks to a settlement of Gulf issues. They recommended waiting until the Ottoman government would be forced to renew its request for a custom increase. The Foreign and India Offices agreed that the Committee of Imperial Defence should decide on a plan of military and naval action in case of need.²

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- 1 Lowther to Grey, 22 August 1910; Grey to Lowther, 17 October 1910; Grey to Lowther, 21 October 1910 (tel.); Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 1 December 1910 (tel.), L/P & S/10/162, register No. 3267.
 - 2 Foreign Office to India Office, 16 January 1911, and India Office to Foreign Office, 26 January 1911, L/P & S/10/162, register No. 3267. On 1 May 1911, the General Staff pointed out that local action in the Gulf would probably not apply pressure in any useful manner, and might lead to Turkish pressure on Egypt, or to full-scale war with Turkey: Ibid. See also Cohen, op. cit., pp. 204-09.

By early 1911 Britain's bargaining position was not as strong as in the previous year, and it was not wise to push the Ottomans without extreme provocation. The Potsdam Agreement of 1910 had removed Russian opposition to the Germans' Baghdad Railway, undermining the solidarity of Britain's Entente partners on the issue. When the Turks presented a new international plan for the Gulf section of the railway in March 1911, Britain above all considered what political terms would best safeguard her position in the Gulf, including items on Kuwait, ^cUqair as the southern limit of Turkish jurisdiction, and renunciation of Turkish claims to Bahrain, Qatar and Zakhnuniyya.¹

Just as the general negotiations with the Turks became serious, one more instance of Turkish intransigence showed the necessity of securing a definitive statement on Bahrain and British rights. In March 1911 three Bahrainis in Basra were ordered by the wālī to take out Ottoman passports. When they refused they were arrested. On being approached by the British Consul, the wālī replied that the Turkish Government did not admit the right of the British Government to protect the natives of Bahrain. Sir Gerald Lowther, the Ambassador at Constantinople, suggested that, in view of the current negotiations between Britain and Turkey concerning the Baghdad Railway and other affairs, advantage should be taken of the action of the wālī of Basra to secure a definite solution of the Bahrain question. In reply the British Government instructed Lowther to inform the Turks that the wālī's attempt to assert Turkish claims in Bahrain, and to deny British protection, constituted a flagrant disturbance of the

¹ Earle, op. cit., pp. 227-28, 239, 252; Busch, op. cit., pp. 322-25; Wolf, op. cit., pp. 62-63 & 89-90.

status quo. Such violations would impede the negotiations for a settlement of Gulf questions and compel action to protect British rights. The Turkish Foreign Minister pleaded ignorance of the incident and of the general question of the status of Bahrain, which he promised to Lowther that he would study. Lowther was to inform the Turkish Foreign Minister that no delay in settling the question could be admitted. The prisoners must be released immediately and their passports accepted. It was discovered by the British Consul at Basra that the Bahrainis were, in fact, released early in April 1911.¹

Before the news was received in London that the Turks had given way in the face of British demands, correspondence with a most important bearing on British policy towards Bahrain had passed between the India Office and the Foreign Office concerning the incident. On 9 May 1911, the India Office stated that, in their opinion, if the Porte issued to the wālī of Basra the instructions which the British had demanded, this would constitute a recognition of "our protectorate", the formal declaration of which might, in that case, "be made part of the general settlement in the Gulf to be proposed later". If, on the other hand, the Porte should, as the India Office expected, reject British demands over the arrest of the Bahrainis, it would be necessary to take immediate action in support of those demands. The India Office suggested that this should take the form of a declaration by the British Government of a protectorate over Bahrain and the seizure and detention of Turkish vessels in the Shatt-al-Arab and Gulf until compensation was

1 Memorandum of information received during the month of April 1911, regarding affairs in Arabia, the North-East Frontier and Burma, 27 May 1911, L/P & S/7/248, register No. 911, p. 10.

paid. Moreover, the Turkish Government should not be allowed "to delay their reply unreasonably" before action was taken.¹

The India Office were not unduly concerned about the effect which a formal declaration of a British protectorate would have on the negotiations with Turkey. It was the impression of Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, that, whatever the British did, they would continue to have to reckon with "the persistent hostility of the Young Turk party, whether under a constitutional regime or a military dictatorship". As far as British relations with Persia were concerned, a declaration of a protectorate over Bahrain would, no doubt, be unwelcome to the Persian Government. Britain, however, had little to lose by offending the Persians who had "not themselves shown any particular desire to conciliate His Majesty's Government". They might therefore, in the opinion of the India Office, be disregarded as far as the making of contingency plans in the present case was concerned.²

The Foreign Office were not impressed with these arguments. Sir Edward Grey was not in favour of the "modification of the status quo" which a formal proclamation of a protectorate over Bahrain would involve. The British Government was proposing to insist, as one of the conditions for British participation in the construction of the southern section of the Baghdad Railway, on the Turkish Government recognising their right to protect Bahrainis in the Ottoman Empire. The unilateral proclamation of a protectorate would have an unfavourable

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 9 May 1911, No. 57, F.O. 424: Turkey: Confidential Prints, No. 9967, p. 76.

2 Ibid., p. 67.

effect on the negotiations in progress. A decision on the next step to be taken in the affair of the arrested Bahrainis should be postponed until the Turkish government had replied to the British demands. Since the Turks gave way, no further action became necessary. The incident did show, however, that, whilst the European aspects of Gulf policy dominated the thinking of Grey, the Indian authorities still wished for clear-cut solutions to local problems, even if they proved disruptive for larger designs.¹

At the time when, in May 1911, the Foreign Office was warning the India Office of the adverse effects on negotiations with the Turks which the proclamation of a protectorate over Bahrain would have, the question of Anglo-Ottoman relations in the Gulf area was the subject for consideration by the Standing Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. This sub-committee was chaired by Lord Morley and included Grey as one of its members. Its terms of reference were to consider the situation in the Gulf and to what extent Turkish claims there might be recognised without damaging British interests.² Of the three questions on which the Sub-Committee was asked to advise, one had a direct bearing on Bahrain:³

What are the utmost limits to an extension of Turkish sovereignty in the Shat-al-Arab and the shores of the Gulf to which we can agree?

1 Foreign Office to India Office, 23 May 1911, F.O. 424/9967, p. 95. See also Viceroy (Hardinge) to India Office, 12 October 1911, (tel.), L/P & S/10/188.

2 Report and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the Persian Gulf, 1 November 1911, Secret (hereafter 'Standing Sub-Committee Report'), Cab 16/15, 4770, p. iv. The other questions were the location of the railway terminus, and seaward navigation to Basra.

3 Ibid., p. 1.

On 30 March, a meeting at the Foreign Office had drawn up, as part of the Anglo-Turkish negotiations, a general memorandum. Among its many provisions, it proposed that Bahrainis in Turkish territory should "enjoy British consular protection". The southernmost limit of Turkish jurisdiction on the Gulf coast should be ^cUqair. It was suggested that the Ottoman Government should renounce all claim to supremacy over any point on the coast south of ^cUqair and to the islands of Bahrain, Muharraq, Zakhnuniyyah "or adjacent islands".¹

As far as the recommendation about the southern limits of Turkish jurisdiction was concerned, Grey stated that he was "anxious to give Turkey all that we reasonably could" and suggested that concessions might be considered. He thought that, whilst the recommendations of the memorandum of 30 March on this question could be put to the Turks as they stood, "more as regards the El Katr peninsula" might be conceded, though stipulations about certain matters such as Shaikh ^cIsā's grazing rights there would have to be made.²

At the second, and final, meeting of the Sub-Committee, on 15 June 1911, Grey once more made it clear that, as long as a definite limit to Turkish sovereignty on the Gulf coast could be agreed on, and as long as any claim by that power to Bahrain or the Trucial Coast was ruled out, he was prepared to be flexible about what could be conceded by the British Government. Grey stated that, whilst Turkey had never made any claim to the Trucial Coast, she had been "pushing forward

1 Memorandum drawn up by a meeting at the Foreign Office, 30 March 1911, enclosure 3, Appendix VII, Standing Sub-Committee Report, p. 68.

2 Minutes of first meeting, 24 May 1911, Standing Sub-Committee Report, p. 5.

lately down towards El Katr, Zakhmuniyah, and so forth". What the British Government wanted was "to get her once and for all to put her hand to limits of sovereignty on her part in the region of the Persian Gulf, which will exclude from her sovereignty places in which we are particularly interested". Britain wanted "really to know how much we can give her". One of the places there was no question about, however, was Bahrain, "which we must have a protectorate over". Whatever limits Turkey assigned "must be subject to excluding Bahrain from her jurisdiction". It was for the British to decide "what limit to the south is the extreme limit which we can concede to her".¹

Despite Grey's talk of concessions, the final recommendations of the Standing Sub-Committee, formulated on 14 July 1911, gave no hint of them. The Sub-Committee did not consider it prudent to agree to any extension of Turkish sovereignty. The southernmost limit should be ^cUqair. It was not thought expedient "to make any concession to Turkey in regard to the El Katr Peninsula" since Shaikh ^cĪsā had "grazing and other rights there" and the peninsula had a strategic importance with regard to the pearl fisheries. It would be desirable if Turkey could be induced to withdraw her military post from Bida^c and to renounce all claims to Bahrain or any point south of ^cUqair.²

The Turks opened conversations in London in July 1911 on the various issues impeding the settlement of the railway question. Grey began to negotiate on the basis of the Sub-Committee's recommendations.

1 Minutes of meeting of 15 June 1911, Standing Sub-Committee Report, p. 9.

2 Standing Sub-Committee Report, p. 2.

The talks were soon interrupted, however, by the Agadir crisis, involving Britain and Germany, and by the Tripolitan War between Turkey and Italy, although Britain and Germany made some parallel progress over the railway early in 1912.¹

The proposed Order in Council for Bahrain had meanwhile been subject already to many more delays. After the Gulf authorities had secured Shaikh ^CIsā's request to give up jurisdiction over foreigners in July 1909, the Government of India in November prepared a draft and sent it to the Resident for comments and alterations.² Then, largely because of the absence on leave of Colonel Cox, that officer did not return the revised draft until a year later.³ The Government of India did not submit the draft to London until June 1911.⁴ There was a further delay from July 1911 to April 1912, whilst suggestions for an Order in Council - modelled on the draft Bahrain order - to cover the whole area of the Persian Gulf Residency, including Kuwait, Bahrain, Bushire, Persian and Trucial Coasts, was considered.⁵

One important amendment was made in the course of 1912 at the request of Shaikh ^CIsā. He had claimed that, when he had ceded jurisdiction over 'foreigners' in July 1909, he had only intended the

1 Earle, op. cit., pp. 253-54.

2 Deputy Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Major A.P. Trevor, in charge of the Residency, Bushire, 16 November 1909, L/P & S/10/248, register No. 951.

3 Cox to officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 27 November 1910, Ibid.

4 Govt. of India, F.D., to Sec. of State for India, 8 June 1911, Secret No. 67, L/P & S/10/248, register No. 951.

5 'Judicial: Proposed Trucial Order in Council', R/15/1/295.

word to cover subjects of "recognised Powers" and not the dependents of petty Arab potentates in the Gulf, with some of whom he claimed to have special arrangements providing for reciprocal acceptance of each other's direct jurisdiction.¹ Shaikh ^ḤIsā had always shown himself to be far more sensitive about losing his jurisdiction over those residents in Bahrain who were members of communities which had traditionally inhabited the Gulf area than over those who were Europeans. This had been demonstrated very clearly at the time of the disturbances of September and November 1904. The fact that, in 1912, he was still prepared to press for the right to exercise jurisdiction over the dependants of Arab Shaikhdoms in the Gulf indicated how anxious he was to cling to as many of his traditional prerogatives as possible. It also showed that, despite the fact that he had been coerced by the British in February 1905, Shaikh ^ḤIsā still had enough spirit left to attempt to retain his remaining rights of jurisdiction.

In fact there was no objection on the part of the British authorities to conceding this particular right to Shaikh ^ḤIsā. Whilst the treatment of the subjects of powers of consequence on a world scale was likely to lead to embarrassment for British ascendancy in the Gulf, this was less likely to be the case with dependants of the petty Arab potentates of the area. In any case, even when the Shaikh's request had been granted, it would still be possible for the British "to intervene ultimately if appealed to on account of flagrant denial

¹ Resident, Bushire, to Govt. of India, F.D., quoted in Viceroy to India Office, 6 July 1912 (tel.), L/P & S/10/248, register No. 2636.

of justice".¹ The proposed Order in Council was amended so that the Shaikh's wishes could be accommodated.

After that the Order in Council awaited the general settlement of Middle East issues among the Powers. The Foreign Office were by now concentrating upon the European elements of the negotiations, and, locally encouraging the Turks - and the Government of India - to accept Britain's proposals on the Gulf by moderating British demands on Mesopotamia and the railway.² The outbreak of the Balkan War in October 1912 again delayed the Turkish response. Finally, the Ottoman Grand Vizier, Hakki Pasha, arrived in London in February 1913 with instructions to make every effort to come to an agreement with Britain.³ For several months the problems of the Middle East generally were under discussion, including those connected with the status of Bahrain. On 7 April 1913, the India Office telegraphed the Government of India that the Turks were willing to withdraw from Qatar entirely on condition that it remained autonomous and was not annexed by Bahrain. On the other hand, they were pressing for recognition of their right to jurisdiction over Zakhnuniyya and the Hasā coast as far south as a point opposite the island.⁴ The Government of India replied that the Turkish proposals appeared generally acceptable subject to certain provisos. Firstly, the autonomy of Qatar should imply "complete renunciation of all claims to suzerainty on the part

1 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., quoted in Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 6 July 1912 (tel.), L/P & S/10/248, register No. 2636.

2 Cohen, op. cit., pp. 227, 229-35; Busch, op. cit., pp. 330-36; Wolf, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

3 Earle, op. cit., pp. 254-55.

4 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, Foreign Dept., 7 April 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/11/46, register No. 1440.

of Turkey", but the door should be left open for the British Government to come to "such agreements or understandings with the El Katr people as may be necessary to secure maritime peace or suppression of illicit arms traffic"; secondly, that Shaikh ^cIsā should be given monetary compensation for waiving his claims to Zakhnuniyya; and thirdly, that the Bahraini fishermen who wintered on Zakhnuniyya should be allowed to continue to do so without interference or levy of dues of any kind.¹

The India Office informed the Foreign Office that they feared that the recognition of Turkish jurisdiction over Zakhnuniyya and the coast between the island and ^cUqair might lead to "some friction in the future". Even so, they were prepared to agree to this concession to the Turks on the conditions recommended by the Government of India and provided that "a thoroughly satisfactory agreement" was reached with the Ottoman Government "on all other points".²

A joint Foreign Office-India Office report of 3 May 1913 on the negotiations with Hakki Pasha included a summary of the results of the talks as far as they concerned Bahrain and Qatar. The Turks were to give up their claims to Bahrain and Qatar and the latter was to be evacuated by them. In exchange they were to receive Zakhnuniyya and the strip of coast between the island and ^cUqair. The safeguards required by the Government of India were secured and the Turks were to pay Shaikh ^cIsā £1,000 for Zakhnuniyya. The British undertook not to

1 Viceroy to Sec. of State for India, 14 April 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/11/46.

2 India Office to Foreign Office, 17 April 1913, L/P & S/11/46, register No. 1140.

annex Bahrain, though not, as Hakki Pasha had wanted, to abstain from altering the nature of their relations with the Shaikhdom. Finally, the British undertook to ensure that Shaikh ^ḤIsā would not attempt to annex Qatar.¹ These provisions were incorporated into the terms of an Anglo-Ottoman settlement which was signed on 29 July 1913.² As far as Qatar was concerned, Article 11 of the Convention stated that the peninsula would be governed "as in the past" by Shaikh Q̄asim b. Thānī and his successors. The British Government undertook "not to allow the interference of the shaykh of Bahrayn in the internal affairs of al-Qatar, his endangering the autonomy of that area or his annexing it".³ By Article 15 of the Convention the British secured Turkish agreement to a right which had been disputed for decades. The subjects of the Shaikh of Bahrain were to be considered as foreigners in Ottoman territories and would be protected by British consuls.⁴

The implications of the Anglo-Turkish Convention for Bahrain and its neighbours was of immediate interest to British local officials and to Shaikh ^ḤIsā himself.

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- 1 Secret report, 'Baghdad Railway and the Persian Gulf: The Negotiations with Hakki Pasha', 6 May 1913, signed by Louis Mallet, and Arthur Hirtzel, Sec. of Political and Secret Dept., India Office, Cab 37/115 (No. 31), 4676, p. 2.
 - 2 See articles 11-15 of Anglo-Ottoman Draft Convention on the Persian Gulf Area, 29 July 1913, J.C. Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, I, 271-72. This text is an English translation of the French original which Hurewitz took from Gooch and Temperley, *op. cit.*, X (ii), 190-94. For the agreements as they were initialled on 6 May 1913 see Cab 42/23, 4676, pp. 9-14.
 - 3 Anglo-Ottoman Draft Convention, 29 July 1913, J.C. Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, I, 271.
 - 4 *Ibid.*

In May 1913 Shaikh ^CĪsā, seeing that it was possible that the Turkish garrison would soon be driven out of Bida^C, considered reviving his claim to levy tribute in the peninsula. The Shaikh also asked the Political Agent to remind the Resident of the Agreement of 1868 by which Shaikh Muhammad b. Thānī had promised to maintain his traditional relations with the Āl Khalīfa Shaikhs of Bahrain.¹ At the India Office it was noted that, although the Āl Thānī rulers of Qatar had, in 1868, bound themselves to pay tribute to the Shaikh of Bahrain, this had been paid for two years only, after which the Turks had established their garrison at Bida^C. Shaikh ^CĪsā's contemplated move was "contrary to the spirit of our understanding to Turkey" not to allow the Shaikh of Bahrain to interfere in the internal affairs of Qatar, even if it had been defensible on other grounds.² The Foreign Office agreed. They advised that Cox should be instructed to oppose any such interference should it be attempted³ and, on 31 July 1913, this was done.⁴ In the event, when, in June 1913, the general purport of the terms of the Anglo-Ottoman Convention, as far as they affected Bahrain, was conveyed to Shaikh ^CĪsā, he was reported to be "pleased on the whole".⁵ He even accepted the loss of Zakhnuniyya as natural.

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- 1 Resident, Bushire, to Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., 17 May 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/11/56, register No. 2261.
 - 2 Unsigned minute of 22 May 1913, L/P & S/11/56, register No. 2261.
 - 3 Foreign Office to India Office, 3 July 1913, L/P & S/11/56, register No. 2465.
 - 4 Deputy Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Cox, 31 July 1913, L/P & S/11/56, register No. 3589. See also Trevor's 25 January 1914 minute thereon, R/15/2/30.
 - 5 Cox to Sec. to Govt. of India, 4 June 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/11/56, register No. 2213.

British political officers in the Gulf had been somewhat inconvenienced by the delays in the Anglo-Turkish negotiations, which had held up the handling of several matters, not merely the protection of Bahrainis and other Trucial Arabs when in the Ottoman territory. They particularly wanted to stop Shaikh ^ḤIsā's insistence upon corresponding with Turkish officials on political matters which were, to the British, obviously the province of the Political Agent.¹ They hoped to solve the problem from the Turkish side once the Convention went into effect. This proved a disappointment, however, because their superiors would not allow it. In the question of the British relationship with Bahrain, there still remained a considerable difference between the British and the Ottoman Governments. Whilst Britain had simply pledged not to annex Bahrain, the Turks had wanted the British to undertake to abstain from altering the nature of their relations with the Shaikhdom. This, of course, the British had not been willing to do. Such an undertaking would run counter to their whole strategy of issuing an Order in Council for Bahrain. Even so, the fact that the Turks were sensitive to any alteration in the nature of the British relationship with Bahrain made the question of when to bring the Order in Council into operation a matter of careful consideration.

In March 1913, when the long process of discussion of and amendment to the Order in Council was drawing to a close, it had been the opinion of both the India Office and the Foreign Office that it should be promulgated "with the least possible delay".² The Order

1 See for example L/P & S/10/384, register No. 4520; L/P & S/11/28; Residency files R/15/2/10 and R/15/1/319, *passim*.

2 Foreign Office to India Office, 5 March 1913, No. 8066, L/P & S/10/248. See also India Office to Foreign Office, 11 March 1913, No. P850, L/P & S/10/248.

in Council was in fact approved by the King in Council on 12 August 1913. Three days later it was published in the London Gazette. This was due to a misunderstanding at the Foreign Office since it had been considered "undesirable on diplomatic grounds, in view of pending negotiations with Turkey and other Powers interested in the Persian Gulf, to proceed further for the present with the promulgation of the Bahrain Order".¹ The reason why no further steps were taken to bring the Order in Council into operation was because it had been thought desirable, in deference to Turkish susceptibilities, to avoid any action even remotely suggesting a 'forward policy' in the Gulf until some time had elapsed after the conclusion of all the negotiations with the Ottomans.

Although the Anglo-Ottoman Convention was signed on 29 July 1913, it still awaited ratification on the outbreak of the First World War and was, in fact never ratified.² The negotiations between the British and the Turkish Governments were never completed. However, the fact that the Ottomans were, from late 1914, adversaries of Britain removed the necessity for considering Turkish susceptibilities over Bahrain.³ On 12 December 1914 the Foreign Office decided that there could be no objection to bringing the Order in Council into operation without further delay and to its publication in the Gazette of India.⁴

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 17 November 1913, No. P4560, L/P & S/10/248.

2 Laithwaite, 'Historical Memorandum', p. 34.

3 Unsigned minute relating to letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 8 December 1914, L/P & S/10/248, register No. 4720.

4 Foreign Office to India Office, 12 December 1914, L/P & S/10/248.

The Government of India was informed of this decision by telegram on 12 January 1915.¹ In fact, the Order in Council was not brought into operation till 1919 since, during the First World War, there was little need for such legal niceties.

By the time the Anglo-Turkish Convention came to be signed, the attention of the British authorities responsible for Gulf affairs had been increasingly drawn to events on the mainland coasts of both Persia and Hasā. The developments in these areas early in 1913 affected British relations with Bahrain to a certain extent.

From 1905 to 1913, Britain's local relations with Persia concerning Bahrain were somewhat similar to Anglo-Turkish relations before the signing of the Convention of 1913. There was even an unsuccessful attempt to secure a definitive renunciation of the Persian claim to Bahrain. Persian officials in the Gulf ports continually harassed Bahraini subjects, and denied British representations on the grounds that Bahrain was a Persian possession, as recognised by Captain Bruce in 1822. The British continued to reject the Persian claim, but Persian resentment at England's part in the Anglo-Russian Convention made the Persians more intransigent over the protection issue following the revolution.² In Bahrain itself, the Persian merchant

1 Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, F.D. (tel.), L/P & S/10/248. See also Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, 15 January 1915, Political No. 7, L/P & S/10/248.

2 Grey to E. Grant-Duff, (Tehran), 9 February 1906 (tel.), L/P & S/10/82, register No. 2652/07. See also register Nos. 2958/07, 3698/07, and 2944/08, L/P & S/10/82. In April 1908 the British representative at Tehran suggested the temporary occupation of Qais or Hormuz to enforce Britain's views about Bahrain: Marling to Grey, 11 April 1908 (tel.), L/P & S/10/82, register No. 3060/08. For the effect of the Anglo-Russian Convention on British prestige in Persia, see C.G. Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 172-95, and Kazemzadeh, op. cit., pp. 501-04.

Hajī ^cAbdul Nabī issued passes to Bahrainis going to Persia as if they were travelling from one Persian port to another. For this and ^cAbdul Nabī's urging of the Persian claim in the vernacular press, Cox tried from 1910 to 1913 to have him expelled from Bahrain. Shaikh ^cIsā was reluctant to alienate the Persian community by such a move, and the measure was put off repeatedly pending the long-delayed issuing of the Order in Council in Bahrain.¹

In 1913 increasing disruption and lawlessness in the provinces forced the Persian government to turn once again to Russia and Britain for financial assistance. Cox saw that a proposed emergency loan from Britain to organise the Swedish-led gendarmerie for the province of Fars might provide an opportunity to settle the Bahrain claim. He suggested seven undertakings affecting British standing in Persia which the Persians ought to accept in order to get the loan. One was the "Abandonment of empty claims to sovereignty over Bahrein and recognition of our protective rights over those islands and Trucial Coast and our title to protect their subjects in Persia".² The British Minister at Tehran, Townley, mentioned the desiderata semi-officially to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who rejected two of the conditions, the lighting and buoying of the Gulf waters of Persia, and the abandonment of the claim to Bahrain. Townley repeatedly pressed the matter from March to May without success. Both governments retained

1 'Persian Pretensions to Bahrain', R/15/2/2, pp. 68-75, 98-115.

2 Cox to Grey, 19 January 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/11/47, register No. 908. For conditions in Fars, and the strains placed on the 1907 Convention by Russian activities in Persia, particularly from 1912, see Greaves, 'Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and its Workings in Persia', loc. cit., pt. 2, pp. 290-308.

their previous views, with Britain trusting that the rights of its consular officers to protect Bahrainis in Persia would not be disputed in practice.¹

The expulsion of the Turks from Hasā by the Wahhābī Amīr °Abdul °Azīz b. Sa°ud in May 1913 was of greater immediate and future significance for British Gulf policy and for Bahrain.

Bahrain figured in the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of the Turks from the coast in May 1913. As Amīr °Abdul °Azīz had defeated his Rashīdī rivals and consolidated his power in Najd after 1902, he had contemplated regaining the former Sa°udi coastal possessions occupied by the Ottomans. He had recognised, however, that Hasā was vulnerable to a counter-attack by sea, and so sought the backing of the British to prevent this. His overtures were declined in 1903 and 1911.²

On 4-5 May 1913 Sa°udi forces swiftly attacked and captured Hufuf. The Sa°udi Amīr occupied °Uqair and Qatīf by 15 May, and expelled the Turkish garrison and officials on the steamship "John O'Scott", which arrived at Bahrain on the 18th.³ At Basra a Turkish officer and a small party of soldiers escorting a large consignment of

1 'Loans to Persia, 1913', L/P & S/10/353, register Nos. 747, 865, 935 and 1348.

2 Gary Troeller, The Birth of Sa°udi Arabia (London, 1976), pp. 21, 41-2.

3 Cox to Grey, 13 and 15 May 1913 (tels.), register No. 1921; Consul Crow, Basra, to Lowther, 23 May 1913, register No. 2844; Capt. Shakespear, Kuwait, to Resident, Bushire, 20 May 1913, L/P & S/10/384, register No. 2558. Troeller, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-4. H. St. John Philby, Sa°udi Arabia (London, 1955), pp. 267-68.

ammunition embarked on 20 May on a mail steamer calling at Bushire and Bahrain. To Cox this indicated a Turkish counter-attack to be launched from Bahrain. He telegraphed for instructions, pointing out the importance of maintaining Shaikh ^CIsā's neutrality, the statement of 1893 that Britain would not permit the trans-shipment of Turkish troops in Bahrain waters, and the delicate state of the Anglo-Turkish negotiations.¹

The Foreign Office instructed Cox to take no action. If necessary a protest could be made ex post facto.² The India Office was not entirely pleased about this:³

F.O. did not consult us about this. Their decision may be right in the circumstances but when once the negotiations are over and the Turks have disinterested themselves in Bahrain it will not be possible to allow the Turks to use it as a taking-off ground for their military operations on the mainland.

The local complications which Hirtzel seemed to anticipate did in fact occur. The commander of the expelled troops at Bahrain, Major Nuris Bey, and the officer from Basra, Colonel Abdul Jabar, kept the John O'Scott at Bahrain on various pretexts, and brought over some men and guns from the garrison at Bida^C on 25 May. The next day Major Nuris Bey with 110 men returned in native boats to ^CUqair. They captured a tower, but part of his force refused to fight on, so he re-embarked, leaving the men in the tower to surrender. Amīr ^CAbdul ^CAzīz sent them back to Bahrain. Although reports from Fao

- 1 Cox to Townley, 20 May 1913 (tel., urgent), register No. 2010; Lowther to Grey, 21 May 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/10/384, register No. 2020. For the 1893 statement, see Nicolson to Rosebery, 2 July 1893, L/P & S/3/327, p. 1153, and previous correspondence, pp. 257, 259, 561, 1149, Ibid.
- 2 Foreign Office to Cox, 21 May 1913 (tel.), L/P & S/10/384, register No. 2020.
- 3 Minute on above by A. Hirtzel, Political Secretary, India Office, 22 May 1913, Ibid.

indicated that the Turks at Bahrain had orders to delay until two gunboats could be summoned from Aden and Bombay, the force returned to Basra on 4 June in the John O'Scott. The Political Agent at Bahrain noted that these activities had been objectionable and embarrassing to Shaikh ^ḤIsā, and calculated to drag him into the dispute. The Agent suggested that a protest be made to Constantinople, stating that any further operations must be carried out direct from Basra to the mainland without touching Bahrain. When the protest was made, the Grand Vizier replied that the troops went involuntarily to Bahrain, and would not do so in future.¹

The Wahhābī Amīr complained that the British had assisted the Turkish troops in Bahrain to return and attack him, despite his own desire to maintain traditional friendly relations with Britain. Cox explained that Major Trevor had not given facilities to the Turks, and that Britain was staying strictly neutral.² In the discussions during the following year between the Foreign Office, India Office and Government of India on the policy to be pursued toward the Sa^Ḥūdī power, the prohibition of Bahrain waters to the Turks was the only practical assurance which officers in the Gulf could point to in the way of preventing an invasion of Hasā by sea.³ The Foreign Office's inability in the prevailing circumstances of world diplomacy to support

1 Crow to Lowther, 23 May 1913, register No. 2844, Cox to Viceroy, 30 May and 5 June 1913 (tels.), register No. 3725; Crow to Lowther, 6 June 1913 (tel.), register No. 2286; Lowther to Grey, 9 June 1913, L/P & S/10/384, register No. 2301.

2 ^ḤAbdul ^ḤAzīz b. Sa^Ḥūd to Cox, 13 June 1913, and Cox to ^ḤAbdul ^ḤAzīz b. Sa^Ḥūd, 9 July 1913, L/P & S/10/384, register Nos. 3441 & 3444.

3 Troeller, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 54, 55 & 59. An invasion direct from Basra in native boats was barely possible in good weather, so the denial of Bahrain was not a complete safeguard: Trevor to Knox, 21 March 1914, L/P & S/10/385, register No. 1603.

Amīr contrasted with the new political realities of the western coasts of the Gulf. Indian officials were soon concerned by the possibility of the reassertion of Wahhābī pretensions to Qatar, the Trucial Shaikhdoms, and even Oman. After a long series of wartime negotiations, the Anglo-Sa^cūdi Treaty of 26 December 1915 included an article, inspired by Gulf officials and the Government of India, by which the Amīr pledged not to interfere with Bahrain, Kuwait, the Trucial Shaikhdoms, and Qatar.¹

One minor matter of Bahrain-Sa^cūdi relations persisted throughout the First World War. In July 1913 the Wahhābī Amīr authorised Shaikh ^cIsā to exercise jurisdiction over inhabitants of Najd and Hasā resident in Bahrain the same as if they were his own subjects. This was in accord with Shaikh ^cIsā's reservation of 1912 to the proposed Order in Council. The Political Agent, Major Trevor, foresaw trouble, as Hasāwīs were at least nominally Turkish subjects, and thus "foreigners", under jurisdiction of the Political Agent. Shaikh ^cIsā felt that the issue touched his dignity, and continually refused to give in on the issue. In 1917 the Political Agent at the time recommended admitting the Shaikh's contention, in order to induce him to accept the Order in Council without trouble, and to prove to Bahrainis that the Order was not intended to infringe on the Shaikh's authority. This view was accepted by the time the Order in Council came into force in February 1919.²

1 Troeller, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-89.

2 Shaikh ^cAbdul ^cAzīz b. Sa^cūd to Shaikh ^cIsā, 14 July 1913, L/P & S/11/68, register No. 4771; Knox to Shaikh ^cIsā, 28 May 1914, L/P & S/11/68, register No. 2725; Capt. Loch, Political Agent, Bahrain, 7 May 1917, L/P & S/11/68, register No. 121/19. See also R/15/1/319, 'Bahrain: Relations of Chief with Other Foreign Powers, 1913-1922'.

The year 1913 saw the signing of the last agreement between the British Government and the Shaikh of Bahrain before the war. It proved to be a document of enormous significance for the economic future of the Shaikhdom.

With the conversion of the British fleet from coal to oil, the Admiralty became increasingly concerned to secure adequate supplies of petroleum at reasonable prices. Part of its programme was to buy a controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, whose fields in south-western Persia had been producing in commercial quantities since 1908. An Admiralty commission under Rear-Admiral Sir Edmond Slade was sent to the Gulf from October 1913 to January 1914 to examine the geology of the oilfields, with a view to justifying the purchase.¹ Although the commission was principally concerned with Persia, Sir Edward Grey suggested to the Admiralty and India Office that Slade should investigate Kuwait and Bahrain as well, and that the Political Resident should secure oil concessions from the shaikhs if the ground looked promising.² In October Cox obtained an assurance from Shaikh Mubārak of Kuwait not to grant a concession to anyone not nominated by the British Government. In Bahrain in November the commission found a very likely area at ^cAin-al-Ghār, south-west of Jabal Dukhān. Admiral Slade recommended the conclusion of a similar agreement at once. He urged that it exclude undesirable British subjects as well as

1 Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy & Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920* (London, 1976), p. 48.

2 Admiralty to Foreign Office, 4 October 1913, and Foreign Office to India Office, 8 October 1913, L/P & S/10/339, register No. 4152.

foreigners, a condition not covered by the 1892 Agreement.¹ On 20 February 1914 Shaikh ^CIsā gave such a verbal assurance to the Political Agent, Major Trevor, who observed that "in fact his manner rather made me think that his own preference would lie in the direction of never giving any concession to any body at all". The Shaikh's written promise, however, stated only that he would consult the Political Agent if he wished to get the oil worked. This was insufficient, but, as the Shaikh was in a suspicious frame of mind, Trevor suggested not pressing the matter further for the time being.² The Government of India then ordered Trevor to secure a written undertaking from Shaikh ^CIsā to consult the Political Agent before entertaining any overtures or exploiting oil himself. After two more tries, this was done in May 1914.³

When the fighting began in Europe in August 1914, Britain's position in the Persian Gulf was as strong as it had ever been, although the various diplomatic arrangements designed to assure this were not quite completed. The war came to the Persian Gulf with some degree of uncertainty, but Britain was able to demonstrate that its military power was still supreme in the region. Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' proceeded to the Gulf on 15 October. On the 18th an officer joined

1 Trevor to Cox, 30 November 1913; Cox to Govt. of India, F.D., 19 December 1913 (tel.), R/15/2/13. For the geologist's report on Bahrain, see L/P & S/10/410. In 1911 Shaikh ^CIsā had indicated his willingness to grant a concession to a British company to work asphalt deposits at ^CAin-al-Ghār, which had been known since 1901. See Cox to Govt. of India, F.D., 13 April 1911, R/15/2/13. Slade wished to exclude Sir Marcus Samuel's company, Shell, whose Dutch connections were suspected of being under German control.

2 Trevor to Cox, 21 February 1914, R/15/2/13.

3 Deputy Sec. to Govt. of India, F.D., to Political Resident, 16 April 1914; Trevor to Knox, 16 May 1914, R/15/2/13.

the Political Agent at Bahrain, Captain T.H. Keyes, in order to prepare for a landing by the Force on the island until it received further orders. Keyes informed Shaikh ^CIsā on 22 October of the intended arrival of the Force the next day. The Shaikh was co-operative, and delegated his son to point out the best camping sites. The transports arrived, but orders were received not to land the troops. After learning of the Turkish bombardment of Odessa, the Force left for the Shatt al-Arab on 2 November.¹

During the days that the troopships were in the roadstead, the people of Bahrain became increasingly uneasy, fearing that the British would occupy the island permanently. The Political Agent observed that public opinion in Bahrain was in general strongly against the Allies:²

... these people, though they dislike both Turk and German, can never forget that the Russians ... bombarded the shrine of Imam Reza ... The chief of the Dawasir told me that if Russia attacked Stamboul not an able bodied man would be left in Bahrein.

... They ask why the British who have taken Egypt, Cyprus, and Aden and have joined Russia, pose as the friends of Turkey. The feeling against us is now strong and almost universal. With the exception of certain of the Al Khalifa and Shaikh Isa's secretaries we have no open sympathisers.

British power was of course too strong to be challenged, but such feelings provided one reason why it was simpler not to introduce the Order in Council for Bahrain, the new legal basis of the British position in the island, during the course of the war.

1 Capt. Keyes to Knox, 4 November 1914, L/P & S/11/86, register No. 4293. Cohen, op. cit., pp. 299 & 301.

2 Cohen, op. cit., pp. 299 & 301. The lone German in Bahrain, the manager of Wonckhaus's business, was arrested on 28 October.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Throughout the period of Gulf history dealt with in this work, there was a tendency for Residents to be more willing than their superiors in India or in London to take bold action in defence of British interests. The Resident at Bushire was not so likely as his superiors to take a broad view of the international implications of his actions in the Gulf. Residents were naturally inclined to take into consideration British interests in the Gulf only. It was incumbent on the Government of India, on the other hand, to frame their policy decisions regarding Gulf affairs in such a way as to further the broader interests of British India, particularly so far as security and commerce were concerned. For the Home Government in general, and the Foreign Office in particular, Gulf affairs formed only a small section of the broad sweep of global interests of Britain and the Empire. Where a Resident at Bushire might see a clear-cut necessity for decisive action in defence of Britain's Gulf interests, the Government of India, and even more so, the Home Government, would be likely to detect a number of reasons for proceeding much more cautiously.

This was a major factor in the history of the change in Anglo-Bahraini relations from 1869 to 1915. In general it can be said that the restraining influence of the higher authorities, those in Britain in particular, increased as the Gulf area became of greater importance in international diplomacy from the mid-1890s onwards. Before about 1895 the Residents in the Gulf had more freedom to take initiatives in Anglo-Bahraini relations than they had later. The signing of both

the 1880 and the 1892 Agreements owed very much to the initiative of Residents Ross and Talbot respectively. In particular, the 1880 Agreement, which, for many years to come, formed the legal basis of Britain's position as protector of Bahrain, was drawn up and signed by Ross without any kind of special instructions from his superiors. Whilst the Government of India had to point out that, as a general rule, such action was inexpedient, both they and the Home Government agreed to ratify the Agreement. In later years, for example in November 1907 at the time of the recommendation to the India Office of an Order in Council for Bahrain, the Government of India were only too glad to refer to the 1880 Agreement as the basis of Britain's 'protectorate' over Bahrain.

From the later 1890s onwards the initiatives of Residents were subject to more critical scrutiny and closer control than in the earlier period. It is in the context of the increased importance of the Gulf in international diplomacy that Lord George Hamilton's criticism in 1899 of Colonel Meade's alleged tendency to exceed his instructions should be seen. Meade was not really more adventurous than predecessors like Ross. The fact was, however, that times had changed: a move which would be considered no more than bold in 1880 would have been regarded as utterly reckless in 1899.

It is true that, under Meade, such British officials at Bushire as Gaskin and Prideaux, had a tendency to want to interfere in the internal affairs of Bahrain to an unprecedented extent. This was especially so in the case of Gaskin who would have been only too pleased to have curbed Shaikh ^CĪsā's oppressive behaviour towards his own subjects. At the same time, such reforming zeal stood hardly

any chance of sanction from either the Government of India or the authorities in London, neither of which at this time had any such interest in Bahrain. It is of course true that both the Home Government and the Government of India wished to see a reform of Shaikh ^CIsā's Customs arrangements. This was, however, not because the basic objective of these Governments was to interfere in Bahrain's internal affairs. What lay at the root of British anxiety for Customs reform in Bahrain was the desire to secure better political representation there, at the least possible cost to Indian revenues, at a time when Britain's whole position in the Gulf was under increasing pressure.

The tendency from the mid-1890s to transfer policy initiatives regarding Bahrain from the sphere of the Resident to those of the Governments of India and the United Kingdom made the next step in the development of the legal basis of Anglo-Bahraini relations particularly difficult. The signing of the 1880 and 1892 Agreements had, as the Government of India had noted in November 1907, made Bahrain in practice a kind of protectorate. It is, in fact, significant that British officials in the 1890s and 1900s quite freely used the word 'protectorate' in relation to Bahrain in their correspondence, though only when such documents were not to be made public. The problem was that, no doubt partly because of the way in which the 1880 and 1892 Agreements had come to be signed, they had not been made the occasion for proclaiming the British protectorate to the world. Before the mid-1890s it suited British purposes to exercise their influence in Bahrain informally. After this time, when it became necessary to assert Britain's position in relation to the Shaikhdom, the fact that a protectorate had never been formally announced proved to be an embarrassment. The problem was that such an announcement required a

suitable occasion if Britain's rivals in the Gulf were not to respond to it with diplomatic challenges. On the other hand, as long as no such announcement was made, the way was open for foreign powers to embarrass Britain by other means.

This issue came to a head over the question of jurisdiction over foreigners in Bahrain. Although the British Agent in Bahrain in practice saw to it that such foreigners received justice, he had no de jure basis for the exercise of such powers. The fact that this left it open to foreign powers to claim extra-territoriality was the chief reason for the preparation of an Order in Council for Bahrain. Even so, fears of the diplomatic consequences helped to delay the emergence of the Order in Council for nearly a decade after the Government of India's proposal for the drawing up of such an Order was presented to the India Office in November 1907. Less directly, the British position in Bahrain was nevertheless bolstered by the arrangements concluded in the course of Britain's European and imperial diplomacy before the First World War. The ententes with France and Russia, and the Convention with Turkey safeguarded British standing in the Shaikhdom through the device of having the rivals renounce their pretensions. The Persians still clung to their ineffectual claim. German political and commercial competition might still cause difficulties, despite German endorsement of the Anglo-Turkish settlement. Relations with the renewed Saudi power were uncertain until the 1915 agreement. The coming of the First World War altered all of these circumstances, and provided as well the occasion for promulgating in 1915 the Bahrain Order in Council which placed relations with Bahrain on a secure legal basis.

It may be suggested here that the British imperial position in the Gulf is a far more complex phenomenon for historians to interpret than the British position in the directly ruled colonies. In areas of indirect control such as the Gulf, the British frequently sought power and control without wishing to admit, for fear of challenge by other Powers, that they exercised it. This meant that a gulf developed between what the British would admit in public and what they knew to be the case in private. With the promulgation of the Order in Council for Bahrain in 1915, this gulf was considerably narrowed; and, to this extent, the British relationship with Bahrain moved a step away from indirect control towards colonial rule.

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IV ARABIC SOURCES

Unfortunately no manuscripts have yet been found that are contemporary to the period under study. The very few that exist have been used by A.M. Abu Hakima in his History of Eastern Arabia and they deal with the eighteenth century and early part of the nineteenth. Nevertheless, the manuscript of ^CUthmān b. Sanad al-Basri, Sabā'ik al-^Casjad fī Akhbār Ahmad Najl Rizaq al-As^Cad does throw light on the origin of the Āl Khalīfa and their establishment at Zubāra in 1766.

The only significant contemporary source on Bahrain is that of Muhammad b. Khalīfa al-Nabhānī, al-Tuhfa al-Nabhāniyya fi Tarīkh al-Jazīra al-^CArabiyya, 2nd ed., Cairo, 1924, 12 Vols.

The author, born and educated in Mecca, was a Sunni Mālikite teacher. In 1913 he visited Bahrain and was asked by its Māliki Shaikhs to write a history of the islands, with special emphasis on the period of Āl Khalīfa. After consulting the family records of Dār al-Asfār, and conducting interviews with the ruler, other members of the Āl Khalīfa and notable merchants the manuscript was completed and published in 1914 in Baghdad. The book was called al-Nabdha al-Latīfa fī al-Hukkām min Āl Khalīfa. The author had also intended to write more volumes on the relations of the Āl Khalīfa with their neighbours such as the Āl-Rashīd, the Āl-Sa^Cūd and the Āl-Sabāh. He was, however, persuaded by a friend named Ahmad Jawdat Bey b. Ali Qāzim Bey, the owner of al-Munīr newspaper of Basra, to expand his work and make it comprehensive of all the Arab peninsula. Thereupon the name of the work changed into the above mentioned title. The

volume on Bahrain, however, became so popular that the British Government asked the Chief of Police at Manāma, Mr Hasan Sadiq, to translate it into English. The task was completed after the end of the war, but, as of yet, there has been no sign of the translation in the India Office Library.

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GLOSSARY

Banian	A Hindu trader
Dubasch	An interpreter (F. Steingass, Persian-English Dictionary)
Durbar	A reception or audience chamber of a prince, Viceroy, etc.
'Istishhād	A testimony
Kran	A silver coin worth between a third and half a rupee
Majlis	A court, council or audience chamber
Mudīr	The administrative head of a Nāhīya (sub-Qadā')
Munshi	A letter-writer or clerk
Mutaṣarrif	The administrative head of a Liwā (sub-province)
Qādī	A Muslim judge
Qā'im maqām	The administrative head of a Qadā
Sharī ^c a	Islamic law
Sukhra	An obligation to perform gratuitous labour; corvee.
^c Urf	Traditional usages and customs
Wālī	The Governor of a province under the Ottomans
Wilayat	The province governed by a wālī
Wazīr	A personal secretary or adviser
Zakāt	Alms tax

Khalīfa b. Muḥammad b. Faysal

He is the first known father of the Āl Khalīfa whose ancestors belonged to the Āl Fadil clan of the 'Utūb tribe of wādī al-Dawāsir. In 1766 the Āl Fadil and other Arab clans arrived in Qatar, from Kuwait and built the forts of al-Murair and Zubāra. Here the Āl Khalīfa flourished and in 1783 invaded Bahrain.

Aḥmad b. Khalīfa

He became the first Āl Khalīfa ruler of Bahrain subsequent to its conquest in 1783 with the help of a conglomeration of various other Arab tribes from Qatar. He died in 1796.

Salman

He succeeded his father to the Shaikhship in 1796, but ruled co-jointly with his brother Ahmad as his subordinate. In 1820 both Shaikhs signed the General Treaty of Peace with the British Government. He died in 1825 and his descendents became known as the Āl Salman

'Abdallah

He ruled co-jointly with his elder brother Salman and lived at Manāma. Upon the death of Salman, in 1825, 'Abdallah moved to Muḥarraq and usurped the executive power leaving his nephew Khalīfa b. Salman to succeed only to half the revenues. After the death of Khalīfa, in May 1834, 'Abdallah allowed his grand nephew Muḥammad to his father's share of the revenues but retained the executive power. In 1843 'Abdallah lost Bahrain to his two grandnephews Muḥammad and 'Ali and became a fugitive. In 1849 'Abdallah died in Muscat and his descendents became known as the Āl 'Abdallah.

Khalīfa

He only succeeded to half the revenues with his uncle 'Abdallah and nominally held power. He died on 21 May 1834 leaving his two sons Muḥammad and 'Ali to tangle for power with their Grand-Uncle 'Abdallah.

Mubārak

He governed Dammām for his father 1843-44 after they both fled Bahrain.

Muḥammad

He was made a Governor of Dammām in 1852 by the Wahhābīs. Until 1861 he was a menace to the trade of Bahrain and a threat to Shaikh Muḥammad b. Khalīfa. In the same year a British naval force expelled him from Dammām. During the invasion of Bahrain, he betrayed his cousin, Muḥammad b. Khalīfa, jailed him and became sole ruler of the island for a period of six months. In 1869, however, he was captured by the British Resident's naval force and deported to India where he died in 1877.

Nasir

He was born in 1848 to the daughter of the headman of the Bani Ḥajir tribe. In 1869 he was among the leaders of the invasion of Bahrain, but later escaped the British blockade of the islands and fled to Ḥasā. He became an Ottoman protégé in the area and engineered several abortive attempts for the occupation of Bahrain

Muḥammad

He was also only nominally admitted to power with his Grand Uncle though he succeeded to half the revenues. Upon showing signs of discontent 'Abdallah assigned him to Qatar as Governor. In 1843, Muḥammad with the help of his brother 'Ali and, possibly that of the Wahhābi Amir of Najd, succeeded in assuming the Shaikhship of Bahrain and throwing 'Abdallah out. In 1861, he signed the famous convention with the British Government which had incorporated Bahrain into the Trucial System.

'Ali

After 1843 'Ali ruled co-jointly with Muḥammad and was more appreciated by the people of Bahrain. While Muḥammad was mis-governing 'Ali was patching up the government. In 1868, the British Resident confirmed 'Ali in power and forbade him to allow his brother back in Bahrain. During the invasion of Bahrain led by Muḥammad, 'Ali was slain in battle, only several months as the sole ruler of the islands.

'Isā

He ruled from 1869 to 1923 when he abdicated in favour of his son Ḥamad but lived until 1933.

In 1868, Muhammad committed a breach of the Marine Truce by attacking some of his subjects in Qatar. Upon the arrival of the British Resident in Bahrain, Muhammad fled, thus leaving his co-ruling brother, 'Ali, in power. The British Resident stipulated that Muhammad should not be allowed back. In 1869, Muhammad, in conjunction with the 'Al 'Abdallah branch of the family, attempted but failed to regain his power in Bahrain and was captured by the British Government and deported to India. In 1877 he was removed to Aden and then in 1888 released. In 1890 he died in Mecca

* This table is based on the following Genealogical Tables:-

1. A.B. Kemball, attached to his Memorandum dated 6 January 1845, Selections from the Government of Bombay, Vol.24, p. 101
2. E.C. Ross, P/775, 1873, p.371
3. E.C.Ross, Appendix B to part I of Administration Report 1882-1883.
4. J.G. Lorimer, op.cit., Historical Part III

**THE
BAHRAIN-
QATAR
AREA**



